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FOOTBALL FOCUS ON MAGIC'S STEVE LAURIE

VPL TOP SIX SERIES WEEK 2

ALL THE VIC CHAMPS KISS MY GRASS ISSUE

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goal! Weekly

Season 4: Issue 29 Monday 8th September 2008

Supporting all colours and reporting in black and white

THERE'S MAGIC IN THE AIR!

BOJO'S MOJO PENALTY SHOOTS ALTONA INTO GRAND FINAL

PLUS▷ ALL THE WEEKEND FOOTBALL RESULTS, BOO, KATSA, TSIGAN, TARTAN TALK, SOCCER HOTLINES & HEAPS MORE!

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STATE LEAGUE DIVISION ONE CHAMPIONS 2008
goal! Weekly
Back Row: David Calleja, Colin Azzopardi , Wayne Wallace, Thomas Johnston, Ilia Tsoumerkas
Middle Row: Steven Manceski , Peter Kousoupias, Nikola Kosutic, Martin John, Johnny Black, Nicholas Harrhy, Mark Grech (Committee Member)
Standing: David McLean (Physio), Matthew Cini, George Papadopolous, Vasko Trpcevski, Alex Arregin, Jose Portillo, Anthony Bowsley, Carl Hessey, Adiel Bonett (Secretary)
Front Row: Alfred Caruana (Committee Member), Jason Burke (Vice President), Charlie Borg (President), Andy O'Dell (Coach), James Baskerville (Assistant Coach), Lewis Cassar (Treasurer), Paul Calleja (Team Manager), Aldo Loriente (Property Stewart)
Absent: Steven Underwood, Paul Wilson, Kevin Malia (Committee Member), Steve Wardle (Committee Member)
Photo: Daniel Flis

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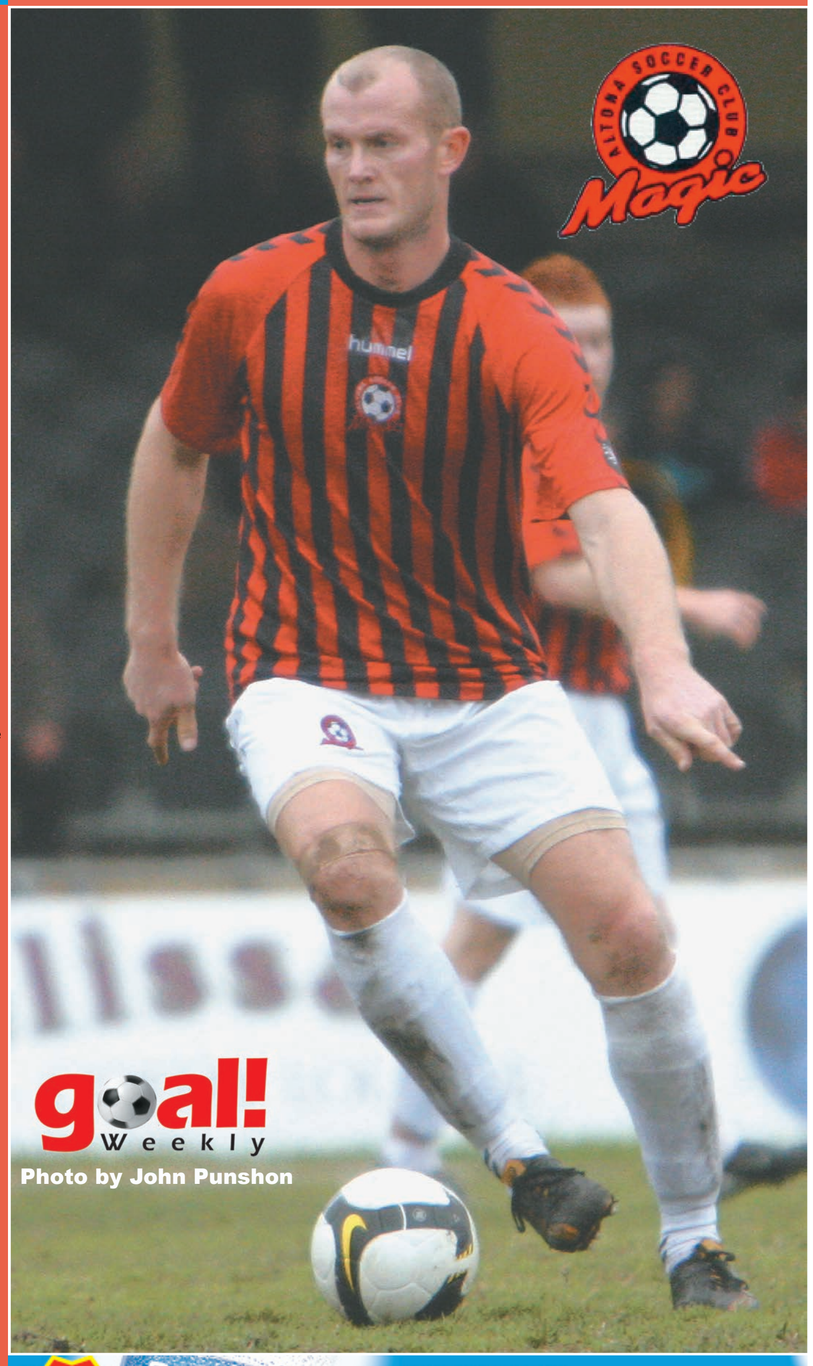
STEVE LAURIE

ALTONA MAGIC FC

FULL NAME: Steven Alexander Laurie
BIRTHPLACE: Melbourne
BIRTH DATE: 30/10/1982
HEIGHT: 6'2 "
WEIGHT: 85kg
MARRIED: No
CAR: Ute
OCCUPATION OUTSIDE OF FOOTBALL: Property development
NICKNAME: Big man
PREVIOUS CLUBS: V.I.S, West Ham United, Peterborough United, South Melbourne, Sydney F.C.
REPRESENTATIVE HONOURS: State team, U17 and U20 National team
CHILDHOOD FOOTBALL HERO: Paul Gascoigne
FAVOURITE O/S PLAYER: Fabio Cannevarro
FAVOURITE FOXTEL CUP PLAYER: Take your pick from our first XI
FAVOURITE FORMER SOCCEROO: Mehmet Durakovic
FAVOURITE CURRENT SOCCEROO: Lucas Neill
MOST MEMORABLE MATCH AS A PLAYER:Captianing U17 National Team against Japan
MOST MEMORABLE MATCH AS A FAN: My first Rangers and Celtic game in 1990
MOST MEMORABLE GOAL YOU'VE SCORED: 1st NSL goal
BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT: Breaking a bone in my foot two days before U20 World Cup
WORST INJURY: Knee op - fractured foot
MOST DIFFICULT OPPONENT: Ricky Diaco
FAVOURITE AWAY GROUND: Bob Jane
SUPERSTITIONS: Coffee and toast every game day at Couple Cinos
TYPICAL MATCH DAY MEAL: Pasta or beans on toast
WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS: Communication
WHAT ARE YOUR WEAKNESSES: Too many to mention
FAVOURITE TEAM WHEN GROWING UP: Altona City
FAVOURITE OTHER SPORTS: Motorcross, wake bording, surfing
FAVOURITE OTHER SPORTSPERSON: Chad Reed
FAVOURITE FOODS: Coutaleti
FAVOURITE ACTOR/ACTRESS: Sean Penn
HOBBIES: My motor bike
FAVOURITE HOLIDAY RESORT: Vareggio
FAVOURITE NIGHTSPOT: Haven't been out in years - too busy thinking about the next game!
IDEAL DATE: F. Cumani
FAVOURITE TV SHOWS: Footy Show, Wipeout
FAVOURITE MUSIC: Xavier Rudd
FAVOURITE FILM: I Am Sam, Note book
LAST SOCCER SHIRT YOU BOUGHT: LA Galaxy
FUNNIEST RUMOUR YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT YOURSELF: Too many to mention
BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON CAREER: Mother AND Father 100%
BIGGEST DRAG IN SOCCER: Pre-season running
FOOTBALL AMBITION: To repay the faith shown by Melissa Fischer-Massa, Vlado and Franz and win the championship
WHICH PERSON IN THE WORLD WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO MEET? : Sir Alan Sugar
YOUR TIP FOR THIS YEAR'S FOXTEL CUP: Altona Magic all the way!



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This week's line-up

Soccer Hotlines	3
Knights v Magic	5
Gully v Bergers	7
State League Wrap	8
A-league Preview	9
Blast From The Past	11
WPL Wrap	12
Euro Wrap	13
Kiss My Grass Special	16
Greek Football	21
Boo, Katsa & Tsigan	22 & 23
Interstate	24
A Pom's Frog View	27
Football Focus	31

Goal! Weekly is published every Monday by
Alimental Enterprises Pty Ltd
PO Box 142
Port Melbourne, VIC, 3207
Phone: 9645-1440

Printed by
Streamline Press
155 Johstone St
Fitzroy, VIC, 3065

Distributed by
All Day Distribution Pty Ltd
PO Box 42
North Carlton, VIC, 3054

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GEORGIES REJOICE!

O'Dell Navigates Another Promotion

Let The Good Times Roll: Champagne moment for Sunshine Georgies players and supporters. Leigh Tsoumerkas does the honours.

There's certain symmetry to contrast the way 2008 ended for the Sunshine George Cross Football Club when you compare it to the end of 2007.

Both seasons ended with a final game of the season at Kevin Bartlett Reserve in Richmond. In 2007 Sunshine had come off home loss in round 25 against the Heidelberg side but other results meant they only needed a result of any kind to survive the drop. They left Richmond battered, beaten and on the wrong side of an eight goals to nil mauling condemning them to Division One football in 2008.

Fast forward a year and they stepped out onto Kevin Bartlett Reserve to take on FC Clifton Hill, promotion secured and knowing that any kind of result would secure the Division One Championship. The supporters left jubilant as a two goals to nil victory delivered promotion and the championship.

The club had a good look at itself after the debacle that was the eight goals to nil which sealed relegation, President Charles Borg and his committee decided not to look back and to pick the bones of what had happened, but opted to look instead towards the challenge that lay ahead. Charlie is a man dedicated to seeing Sunshine George Cross move forward as a football club.

He is a tireless worker and in his tenure as president, the club has gone from being on the brink of extinction and as low as State League Division Two, to playing Premier League football once again. Saturday's achievement was in fact the second VPL promotion under Borg. Others in his Committee, Lewis Cassar, and Jason Bourke, along with many others dedicate many hours of work both at the club and away from the club, doing their utmost to further the clubs cause. These people are the bedrock by which this club's resurgence and revival and continued success is built upon.

It was inevitable that players would come and go once relegation became a reality. Players to leave included Anthony Magnacca, Brett Gilmour, Nicholas Kalmar, Alfonzo Opazo, Eduardo Soares, Ralph Napoli, Michael Fiorenza , Peco Dimovski, Goran Talevski, Adam Gauchi-Seddon, Miguel Barrigos and Craig Sweeney - all left the club in search of greener pastures and this would inevitable cause changes in the style and the way the club played.

It was necessary to recruit players for the club to be competitive in a division which looked to be a very challenging and difficult league to escape from. The other major change was the release of senior coach John Markovski who coached the club for about half the season after replacing Joe Montemourro.

For 2009 the club searched for a coach who could bring players to the club, bring a new philosophy to the club and bring a winning mentality back to the club and the players who remained.

Enter Andy O'Dell a coach who was well credentialed as a player and a coach. Andy enthusiastically took on the task of taking this sleeping giant and turn it into a competitive outfit. O'Dell practically built a new squad from scratch and recruited James Baskerville, George Papadopoulos, Peter Kotsoupias, Kile Kennedy, Steven Manceski, Anthony Bowsley, Thomas Johnston, Wayne Wallace, Julian Zach, Jacob Quickendon, Paul Wilson and Steven Underwood. A number of these players signed from England. What these boys bought to the table was skill, determination, enthusiasm and a winning spirit. This was to carry them to glory.

Season 2008 started with four consecutive wins and for the most part playing a very good brand of football, supporters were starting to wonder if there was some potential in this season. Sunshine made the short trip up Forrest Street to Westgate and on a cold Saturday night were completely played of the park and spanked three goals to one in a game where they were sent crashing to earth with a thump. Many left Ardeer Reserve wondering if the bubble had burst and if there may have been a false dawn. Andy O'Dell and his troops rallied and proved that they were made of sterner stuff. Through to Round 12 the club had another unbeaten run and were in a very strong position to be able to challenge for a promotion spot.

Round 12 saw a blockbuster as the other promotion chasing team, the Dandenong Thunder, came to Chaplin Reserve and all looked to be rosy for the Georgies as the game entered the final five minutes.

Leading one nil and seemly looking to be heading towards victory Dandenong found something and not only stole an equalizer but stole all three points to put themselves right into the chase for the promotion spots. The club only lost one more game for the season which saw them clinch promotion in the penultimate Round 21. Sunshine and Dandenong both had wins whilst Southern Stars succumb to Bulleen meaning that they were gone and the last round would be to determine the champion. Both teams recoded victories by the same score of two goals to nil and thus the status quo was maintained and filling the two promotion spots - Sunshine finished first on 51 points and Dandenong Thunder on 48 points.

The challenge for Sunshine now is to be competitive and stay in the Premier League. Players will come and players will go, but the club needs to recruit wisely and recruit players who play for the club and not the dollar. With all due respect, Sunshine must avoid becoming a yo-yo club battling relegation and promotion from year to year. The challenge begins now.

Congratulations should also be extended to the players, committee and supporters of the Dandenong Thunder, who also achieved promotion. This is a long overdue attempt at making the big time for the Thunder, who have been close the past few seasons without making the leap. Continued success to them in 2009.

By Reuben Schembri

Photo by John Punshon

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FOXTEL CUP FINAL STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PT
1 Green Gully Cavaliers	26	15	8	3	41	17	+24	**53**
2 Melbourne Knights	26	14	10	2	47	25	+22	**52**
3 Altona Magic	26	13	8	5	44	29	+15	**47**
4 Heidelberg Utd	26	11	9	6	41	30	+11	**42**
5 Richmond	26	11	7	8	57	35	+22	**40**
6 Preston Lions	26	12	3	11	37	46	-9	**39**
7 Oakleigh Cannons	26	10	7	9	28	24	+4	**37**
8 A.I.S	26	10	6	10	41	35	+6	**36**
9 South Melbourne	26	10	4	12	35	32	+3	**34**
10 Coburg Utd	26	9	4	13	29	40	-11	**31**
11 Whittlesea Zebras (R)	26	7	9	10	31	33	-2	**30**
12 Western Suburbs (R)	26	5	7	14	23	42	-19	**22**
13 Fawkner Blues (R)	26	6	3	17	22	59	-37	**21**
14 Frankston Pines (R)	26	4	5	17	19	48	-29	**17**

TOP SIX SERIES RESULTS

Minor Semi Final

Green Gully Cavaliers 0 - 2 Heidelberg United

Major Semi Final

Melbourne Knights 1 - 1 Altona Magic

Magic wins 4-3 on penalties

UNDER 21 DETAILS

Rank	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	Green Gully Cavaliers	26	17	3	6	42	23	19	54
2	Richmond	25	15	1	9	51	29	22	46
3	Whittlesea Zebras	25	13	2	10	44	37	7	41
4	V.I.S	25	11	7	7	42	31	11	40
5	Oakleigh Cannons	25	11	7	7	31	22	9	40
6	Coburg Utd	24	12	3	9	40	35	5	39
7	Melbourne Knights	24	11	6	7	29	33	-4	39
8	Preston Lions	22	10	7	5	31	19	12	37
9	Western Suburbs	24	10	5	9	38	29	9	32
10	Fawkner Blues	22	9	3	10	26	30	-4	27
11	Altona Magic	26	8	3	15	26	39	-13	27
12	Frankston Pines	25	8	2	15	19	31	-12	20
13	South Melbourne	25	5	5	15	17	43	-26	20
14	Heidelberg Utd	26	3	4	19	23	58	-35	13

THE TOP MARKSMEN

Player	Matches	Goals
Cardozo, Pablo Richmond Eagles	23	21
Barisic, Andrew Melbourne Knights	26	17
Curcija, Michael Altona Magic	27	16
Naidovski, Jason A.I.S	13	12
Nikolic, Joel Green Gully Cavaliers	26	12
Cardozo, Richard Richmond Eagles	24	10
Lagana, Frankie M Oakleigh Cannons FC	23	10
Sapazovski, Johnny Preston Lions	26	10
Danning, Kofi D A.I.S	26	9
De Moraes, Fernando South Melbourne FC	25	9
Karpeh, Jerry Whittlesea Zebras FC	25	9
Tsiorlas, Mark Heidelberg United	27	9
Cergovski, Pece Altona Magic	24	8

FOXTEL FINALS FIXTURES

Week 1
QUALIFYING FINAL
Green Gully 1
Melbourne Knights 1
Knights win 5-6 on pens
(Winner of Qualifying Final advances to Major Semi-Final. Loser proceeds to Minor Semi-Final)

1st ELIMINATION FINAL
Altona Magic 2
Preston Lions 1
(Losers of Elimination Finals are eliminated. Winners proceed to Semi- Finals)

2nd ELIMINATION FINAL
Heidelberg United 2
Richmond Eagles 1
(Losers of Elimination Finals are eliminated. Winners proceed to Semi- Finals)

Week 2
MAJOR SEMI-FINAL
Melbourne Knights 1
Altona Magic 1
Magic win 4-3 on pens
(Winner of Major Semi-Final advances to Grand Final, loser proceeds to Preliminary Final)

MINOR SEMI-FINAL
Green Gully 0
Heidelberg United 2
(Winner of Minor Semi-Final advances to Preliminary Final, loser is eliminated.)

Week 3
Preliminary Final
Heidelberg United
v
Melbourne Knights
KO 3PM Sun 14 Sep
Epping Stadium
(Winner of Preliminary Final advances to Grand Final, loser is eliminated)

Week 4
GRAND FINAL
Altona Magic
v
Winner of Preliminary Final

Please check the FFV website for any fixture changes.

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

1 - 1

Magic win 3-4 on penalties

ALTONA MAGIC

MAGIC MOMENTS!

Altona Hold as Knights Fold

Altona Magic have progressed into the final of the Foxtel Cup Grand Final after defeating the Melbourne Knights 4-3 in penalties at Knights Stadium.

The visitors with nothing to lose and all to gain came into this match full of confidence and form, undefeated in their last five games.

Melbourne Knights got off to a dream start opening the scoring after just seven minutes, some very poor defending from the Altona back four gifted Kiratzoglou the ball in the area, the veteran midfielder making no mistake slotting his half volley under Jevdjevic and into the bottom corner.

Altona took some time to find their feet in the game, and they had to wait until the 24th minute for their first attempt at goal. Carl Recchia's free kick took a deflection but did not trouble Savas Ozdemir in the Knights goal.

Minutes later former Knights Henry Fa'Arodo set up veteran striker Michael Curcija, who unleashed a powerful drive that beat Ozdemir but not the post.

The Knights wasted a golden opportunity to double their lead in the 32nd minute, Andrew Barisic beat the offside trap however the Knight's top goal scorer could not beat Bojo Jevdjevic in the Magic goal.

Joe Spiteri also spurned a glorious chance to score a minute later, when he could only direct his header directly at the goalkeeper following a free kick from Watson.

Agim Sherifovski and Phillip Riccobene continued to find time and space on the wings, but lacked the quality crosses to cause any damage as the Knights went into the half time break unfortunate not to extent their one goal lead.

In the second half the tempo increased a few notches, Andrew Barisic saw his effort sky over the bar following a Knights counter attack, but it was the visitors who made all the early running.

The Magic desperate to equalise squandered a golden chance in the 56th minute, Henry Fa'Arodo's effort was blocked by some last ditch Knights defending, the ball rebounded to Todd McSorley who could only sky his effort from 10 yards out.

Altona piled on the pressure as the home side put numbers behind the ball, in the 61st minute Esala Masi set up Curcija who forced a save from Ozdemir, before a Riccobene cross a minute later was met by Fa'Arodo who also forced a save from the keeper.

The pressure did pay off just moments later, Masi laying the ball of for Carl Recchia to drive his shot past Ozdemir and get the goal the visitors deserved.

It got worse for the Knights in the 79th minute, key player Ivan Franjic went down in extreme pain in what looked like a hamstring injury forcing the Knights to reshuffle their midfield.

As extra time loomed either side could and should have won the game. Esala Masi again causing a nuisance upfront set up Recchia whose shot was blocked, as Pece Siveski followed up by blazing over the bar. In injury time Cameron Watson released Barisic into space, however the striker deciding to shoot immediately caused him to scuff his shot wide.

Extra time took its toll on the tiring players, as chances were few and far between. In the 104th minute Cameron Watson's cross was met by Jamie Cumming who watched agonisingly as his header was cleared off the line. Henry Fa'Arodo scooped his shot wide after being set up by Curcija, but it Jedjevic who again kept the Magic in the game. Kiratzoglou broke down the left wing, his cross was met by Watson with Jedjevic pulling off a point blank save and forcing the game into Penalties.

The Knights got off to the worst start at Jedjevic saved Watson's effort first up, and Michael Curcija made no mistake to hand Altona the advantage. Ozdemier got the Knights back into the shootout saving Recchia effort, however Joe Spiteri handed the advantage straight back to Altona with a poor penalty. There was to be no fairytale comeback for the Knights this time as Mladenovic and Kalmar coolly converted their spotkicks to book the Magic a spot in the Grand Final.

The Melbourne Knights and Heidelberg Warriors will battle it for the chance to take on Altona in the final when they meet next week in what will be a blockbuster encounter.

Penalty Sequence (Knights first penalty)
Cameron Watson (MK) SAVE (0-0)
Michael Curcija (AM) GOAL (0-1)
Andrew Barisic (MK) GOAL (1-1)
Carl Recchia (AM) SAVE (1-1)
Alex Kiratzoglou (MK) GOAL (2-1)
Slave Bozinovski (AM) GOAL (2-2)
Joe Spiteri (MK) SAVE (2-2)
Doug Mladenovic (AM) GOAL (2-3)
Steve Iosifidis (MK) GOAL (3-3)
Nicholas Kalmar (AM) GOAL (Altona win 4-3)

Match Stats
Shots: MK 10 AM 16
Target: MK 7 AM 8
Corners: MK 6 AM 2

Melbourne Knights Line Up: Ozdemir, Iosifidis, Grbesa, Elvin, Franjic (Piorkowski 79'), Timmons, Kiratzoglou, Watson, Barisic, Spiteri.

Not Used: Loncaric, Muriqi, Zahra, Petrevski.

Yellow Cards: Spiteri (116')

Goals: Alex Kiratzoglou 7'

Altona Magic Line Up: Jevdjevic, Anthopoulos, Mladenovic, Fa'Arodo (Kalmar 115'), Recchia, Curcija, Siveski, Sherifovski (Bozinovski 59'), McSorley, Riccobene, Masi.

Not Used: Roganovic, Mrkela, Sweeney.

Yellow Cards: Sherifovski (33'), Riccobene (49'), Anthopoulos (94')

Goals: Carl Recchia 64'

MoM: Carl Recchia (Altona)

Crowd: 2000approx @ Knights Stadium.

By Andrew Fisher
Photo by Daniel Flis

Altona Magic managed to hold off the Melboutrne Knights to proceed to the Grand Final

Magic's scorer Carl Recchia and Con Anthopoulos get that Grand Final feeling

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GREEN GULLY CAVALIERS

0 - 2

HEIDELBERG UNITED

GULLY WOBBLES OUT OF FINALS

Minor Champs Burnt by Bergers

Two goals from seasoned veteran Mark Tsiorlas has given Heidelberg United an emphatic win over Minor Premiers Green Gully.

The result means Green Gully goes crashing out of the finals after two straight defeats, similar to Oakleigh in 2006 after they failed to win a game in the finals despite finishing on top after the regular season. Everyone on the Heidelberg United team right from Gavalas in goals to Groenewald up front put in a great effort and showed the hunger and determination that is needed to win the Foxtel Cup.

After the match Heidelberg midfield sensation Graham Hockless thought that the game was won thanks to "our overall attitude, from the start we did the hard work initially and we had the quality to come through and create chances for ourselves". On the other side of the coin Green Gully must look at this season as a wasted opportunity after finishing as Minor Premiers but failing two weeks in a row in the finals series, the word "choke" was thrown around the terraces of Green Gully Reserve as the final whistle blew for a disastrous end to an otherwise great year for Gully boys.

The game was very tight through out meaning chances were few and far between. Heidelberg took the initiative early and created some early chances, Saso Aleksovski fired a warning shot in early which just flew past Steve Tilovski's left hand post. Heidelberg were rewarded for their early pressure when Mark Tsiorlas opened his account for the day. The goal came after some great work down the left flank by Hockless and Gasparis which lead to Hockless with plenty of space at the top of the box, Hockless' cross was deflected in by Tsiorlas from about 7 yards out who probably blinded Tilovski in goal. Tsiorlas almost made it 2-0 only about 5 minutes later when his shot from the top of the box was brilliantly saved by finger tips of Tilovski.

From their Gully started to fight back but failed to create any real chances, they looked semi-dangerous on the counter and from set pieces but the Heidelberg defence just wouldn't let up. Towards the end of the first half the Bergers thought they had a legitimate claim for a red card when Groenewald appeared to be fouled by Gully's last man outside the box, but the referee deemed it a fair challenge to the outrage of the travelling Bergers who had come to Gully in their hundreds.

At the start of the second half Gully gaffer Ian Dobson took off John Adam and Matt Sanders and replaced them with Kristijan Ivesic and Aziz Behich as knew he had to make big changes if Gully were to get back into it. The game picked up pace at the start of the second half with Gully starting to get the upper hand. Gully thought the had equalised when a cross from Ivesic found two Gully strikers in the 6 yard box on their lonesome, but their celebrations were cut short when they saw the lineman's flag up for offside. Only minutes later against the run of play Heidelberg doubled their lead. A world class cross from Josh Groenewald landed on the head of the advancing Tsiorlas who's diving header was put past a hapless Tilovski in goals. From their the game was pretty much over, Heidelberg should also thank their keeper Gavalas who had a faultless game in goals, catching everything that came his way.

The result means Heidelberg will face Victorian football juggernauts the Melbourne Knights after the Knights lost to Altona Magic on penalties on Sunday. When asked who he would rather play Graham Hockless replied "I don't think it matters, I think this season we've proved we perform better against the better sides through out the competition". Hockless believes that the Bergers can match it with anyone in the league and his word's echoed a self belief that was evident on the field from Heidelberg on Saturday. Hockless has been one of the main reasons the Bergers have had such a great run in 2008, some have tipped him as the 2008 Gold Medallist but Hockless said "it would be a nice personal award but something I'm not really focused on" but said "after last year I set myself a target of coming in the top three". If the Bergers play as they did today there is absolutely no reason why they cannot take top honours.

Next's week encounter shapes up as a mouth watering clash, all Victorian football fans are encouraged to come down and watch these two giants of Victorian football slog it out for a right to play Altona in the Foxtel Cup final.

Green Gully
Line Up: Tilovski, Burton, Fak, Fleming, Koce Delev, Adam (Ivesic 46'), Sanders (Behich 46'), Ollerton (Banks 70'), Medjedovic, Vargas, Nikolic
Goals: none
Yellow Cards: Fleming, Ollerton
Red Cards: none

Heidelberg United
Line Up: Gavalas, Vassiliadis, Stefanou, Jones, Drossos, Aleksovski (Roberts 70'), Alilovic, Gasparis, Hockless, Tsiorlas (Ameti 75'), Groenewald (Paton 87')
Goals: Tsiorlas 16', 68'
Yellow Cards: none
Red Cards: none
Man of the Match: Tsiorlas (Heidelberg United)
Crowd: 900

By Michal Skrodsky

Photos by Daniel Flis

Heidelberg's Mark Tsiorlas puts the final nail in Gully's coffin as he steers his diving header past former Fawkner team mate, Gully keeper Steve Tilovski

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INTER INTO SIXTH GRANNY

Lions and Bergers Left to Slug it Out

Box Hill Inter progressed to its fifth successive Grand Final, as it saw off the challenge of Preston Lions at John Cain Memorial Park on Sunday.

The match was settled by a single goal in favour of the minor premier, which has taken the shortest possible route to the Grand Final, needing just one finals match to secure its place in the season decider. This was a match that had the real potential to go either way, with Preston one of the only two sides to have defeated Inter during the regular season, and recently at that, with a 2-1 result in Round 20.

When it comes to finals football, however, history means little. Inter took control of the match from the start, scoring in the opening ten minutes, with the goal that was to prove the difference between the two sides. Tal Karp was dominant for Inter, controlling the game, and it was only some desperate defending and a strong performance from Preston goalkeeper, Nabila Saliba, that prevented the margin between the sides being greater. Preston looked tired from the outset, but it will need to regroup quickly for next weekend's last chance preliminary final.

Preston will now take on Heidelberg United in that preliminary final, as it saw off Ashburton in thrilling fashion in extra time. Once again, Ashburton's finals hoodoo struck, and it exits the finals without a win, after a season that promised so much. Bizarrely, Ashburton lost as many games in the finals as it did in the whole of the regular season.

The match was fairly even for the first half, with Belinda Pannella and Sarah Groenewald looking dangerous for Heidelberg, but neither side was able to find the net. The match came alive in the second half, as Ashburton became more involved in the contest, and it took the lead when Christine Pfeiffer latched on to a lovely through ball and finished coolly. With the ninety minute mark fast approaching, it appeared that Ashburton was destined to win, but there was more drama yet to come. Five minutes of added time were played, during which Ashburton coach Chris Michail was sent off, and then Heidelberg grabbed a dramatic late equaliser. A defensive error in the Ashburton back line allowed Heidelberg substitute Heleena Alatsas in, and she chipped the advancing 'keeper to level the scores.

The late equaliser clearly gave Heidelberg the ascendancy, and deflated Ashburton, which had been seconds away from the preliminary final, and so it was the reigning premier that took the honours in extra time. It took until the second period for the goal to come, but it was once again dramatic. Ashburton custodian Antoinette Michail brought down Groenewald in the penalty area, and Groenewald picked herself to despatch the penalty into the net, and keep her side alive for another week.

So Inter enjoy yet another week off to prepare for the Grand Final, while Preston and Heidelberg face off for the right to play them. Heidelberg has a slight psychological advantage, having won both encounters between the sides during the season 2-0. That said, this weekend has proved once again that the regular means little when it comes to finals football, and the match will be determined by which of the two tired sides can rejuvenate quickest for the most crucial match of the season.

By Niki Cook

Photos by John Punshon

Amanda Lawless clecbrates the goal that put Box Hill Inter into the Grand Final

Heidelberg's Julia Nicolaci makes things difficult for Ashburton keeper Antoinette Michail. Stacey Louras (let) and Rosie Bureta guard the goalmouth

Kate Christoff (Preston) stretches to deny Box Hill's Amanda Lawless the ball

Heidelberg clebrates their late goal through Heleena Altasas when Ashburton keeper Antoinette Michail is clearly not happy with her defence

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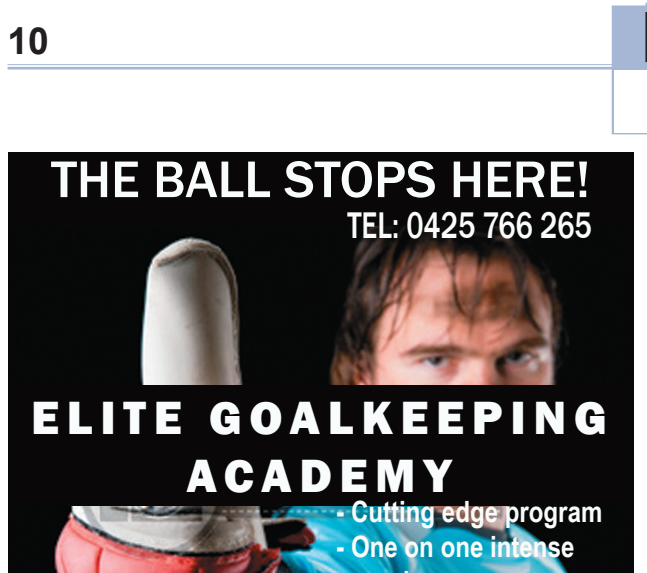

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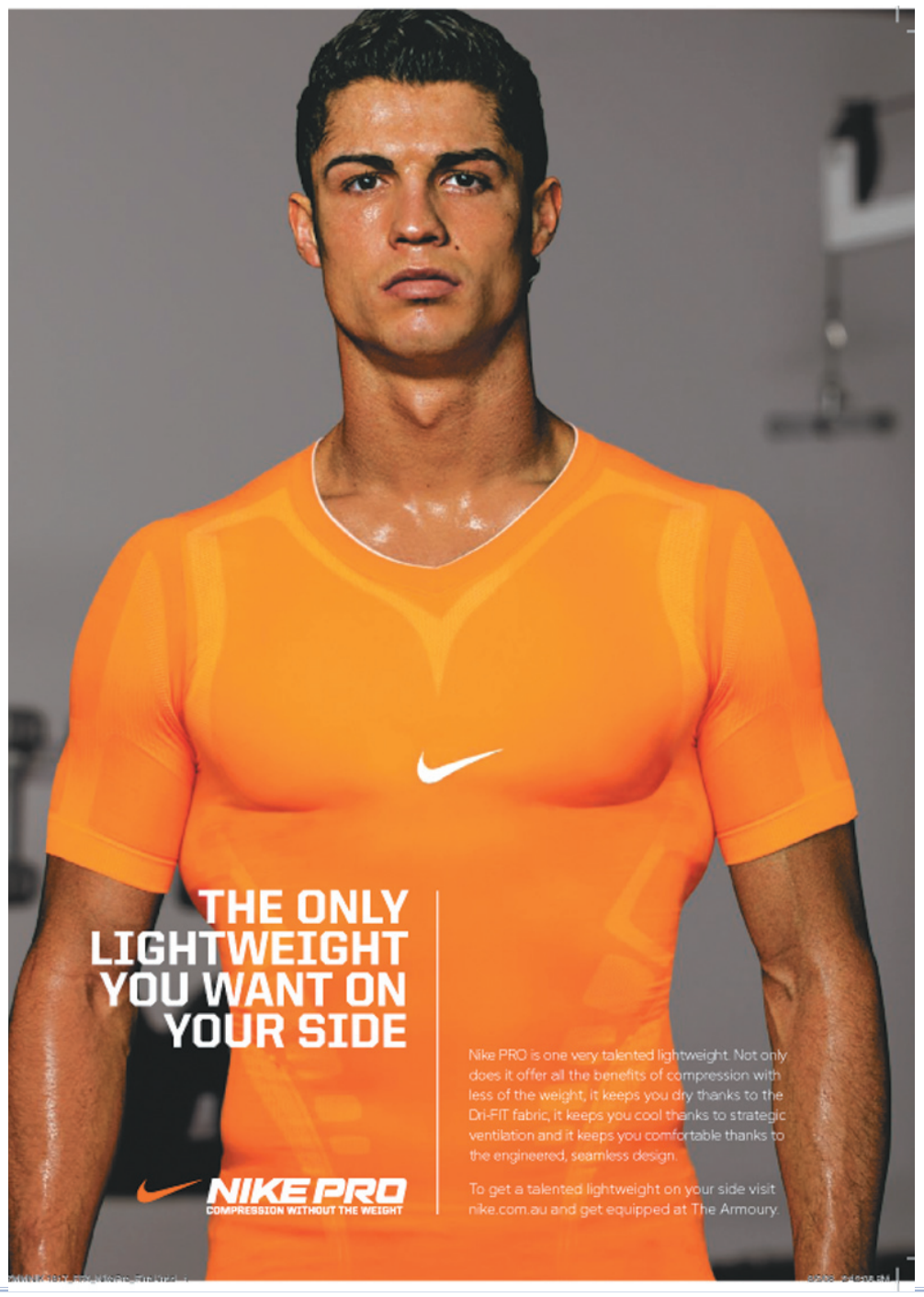

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BLESSED BLACK & WHITES

The Early Years of a Youthful Juve

Juventus of Italy is one of the great institutions of world football, and its Victorian counterpart came into being with arrival of numbers of Italian migrants in the aftermath of the Second World War.

These were by no means the first Italians to settle in Australia and at least two Italian teams played in Victoria in the 1930s. Melbourne's Juventus was founded in 1948 with a policy of 'admitting all players and officials of the old teams and any other person without distinctions.' At one of the first meetings it was clearly established that the club 'would not involve itself in politics, local or Italian', and the name Juventus was chosen 'because it was apolitical and as far as possible not adaptable to ideas and situations not connected with soccer.' As with many other clubs of the new migrant communities, the churches played a role in their origins. Three members of the Roman Catholic church were present at the inaugural meeting of Juventus and its foundation was announced from the pulpits during masses in churches in West Melbourne. Funds were tight despite some generous donations and to begin with Juventus played in some old blue tops from the pre-war Savoia team and it was not until these wore out that it switched to the black and white stripes of La Vecchia Signora.

Juventus began its competitive matches in Division Three of the Victorian Amateur Soccer Football Association in 1949. Its very first game resulted in an eight-two victory over Brighton, followed by a five-one win against Northcote. That set the tone for the season and Juventus finished in a share of first place with fierce rival George Cross. The latter won a play-off to decide the title, but both teams were promoted to Division Two.

The 1952 team which won the first of five successive Victorian Division One championships. Back row, left to right: Rino Fontana, Stewart (Masseur), Giuseppi Sabidussi, M Carollo, Carlo Camilleri, Antonio Rubbini, Antonio Novaselich, Ivan Hrnic (Trainer), Rino Carollo. Front row: Antonio Cernizza, Igor Scalamera, Enzo Muzzin, Bill Copeland, Trentini, Guido Pittoni. Not in picture: Sergio Bassi. Source: Soccer News, 4 October 1952, p. 10.

In 1950, Juventus finished in 5th place in Division Two behind Western Suburbs, but in 1951 the club came second, six points adrift of JUST and was promoted to the First Division. What followed was an unprecedented and unrepeated run of success, with Juventus winning the First Division for the next five years. The Italian Olympic cyclist Nino Borsari, by this time a successful Australian businessman, and his wife, the opera singer Fanny Cester, had a huge influence on both the on-field and off-field success. Ivan Hrnic became coach in 1951 after JUST had turned down the Dalmatian saying he was inexperienced. Borsari spotted his talent and his patience and gave the new man his head. So Juventus won the league in 1952, winning 13 games and drawing 5. There were no defeats. Bill Copeland, who hailed from Greenock in Scotland, banged in 28 of the 60 goals scored that year. Sergio Bassi was 33 1952, but still in his prime. He had been playing for 17 years including games for Milano before coming to Australia. He represented Victoria several times. Guido Pittoni was a champion basketballer in Milan, while Antonio Novaselich was a junior with Torino and Giuseppe Sabidussi played in the reserves for Udinese.

Juventus reserves also won their league and both teams reached their respective Cup finals. In the Dockerty Cup the seniors came a cropper in a five-nil defeat by Brighton. Most of the Juventus team turned out for Italy in the local World Cup and when they came up against Scotland in October there was a real battle and a pitch invasion which resulted in suspension of the team from cup competitions. That ban was lifted as part of an amnesty when Queen Elizabeth II ascended to the throne on 2 June 1953.

In 1953 there were a couple of losses in the league, but Juventus came out on top by a point from Hakoah. In 1954 the gap to Hakoah widened to two points in another season in which Juventus did not lose a single game in the league. The following year Juventus was challenged all the way by Polonia and only won the league on goal average as both teams had 29 points. Mario Busidoni, 'the Colossus from Pola', won the Argus medal as the best and fairest player in the First Division. In 1956, the league was again decided on goal difference, this time from Hakoah. Both teams had 13 wins, two draws and three losses and each scored 66 goals. Juventus only conceded 22, while Hakoah leaked 31 and thus came second.

The great run of championships ended that year, but in 1958 Juventus bounced back to win the first season of the newly created State League, this time from a new challenger, the Dutch club, Wilhelmina. But the domination of the league from 1952 to 1956 remains the benchmark for Victorian soccer.

By Roy Hay

Photos sourced by Roy Hay

Bill Copeland, Juventus's Scottish born centre forward and top scorer in 1952. Source: Soccer News, 30 May 1953, front page.

The great Sergio Bassi, Juventus and Victoria, Source: Soccer News, 6 June 1953, front page. Taken when he played the 1953 season with Hakoah.

Acknowledgement: This column owes a lot to Egilberto Martin and his wonderful history of the club, Juve! Juve! published in English and Italian in 1990.

Enzo Muzzin, Juventus and Victorian star of the 1950s. Source: Soccer News, 16 May 1953, front page.

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GOALS PAY THE RENT!

A-League Off To A Flyer As Onion Bags Cop A Caning

It's been an incredibly high-scoring season so far with a phenomenal forty five goals having already hit the nets in just three rounds.

Compared to the sparing twenty two doled out by the same time last year, Australian A-league fans have enjoyed a veritable goal frenzy and there is no indication that it'll stop. The victors of this fourth round will capitalise on an important psychological advantage. From the points spread and the way the matches are aligned, this round will likely separate the teams tying for first, third and last.

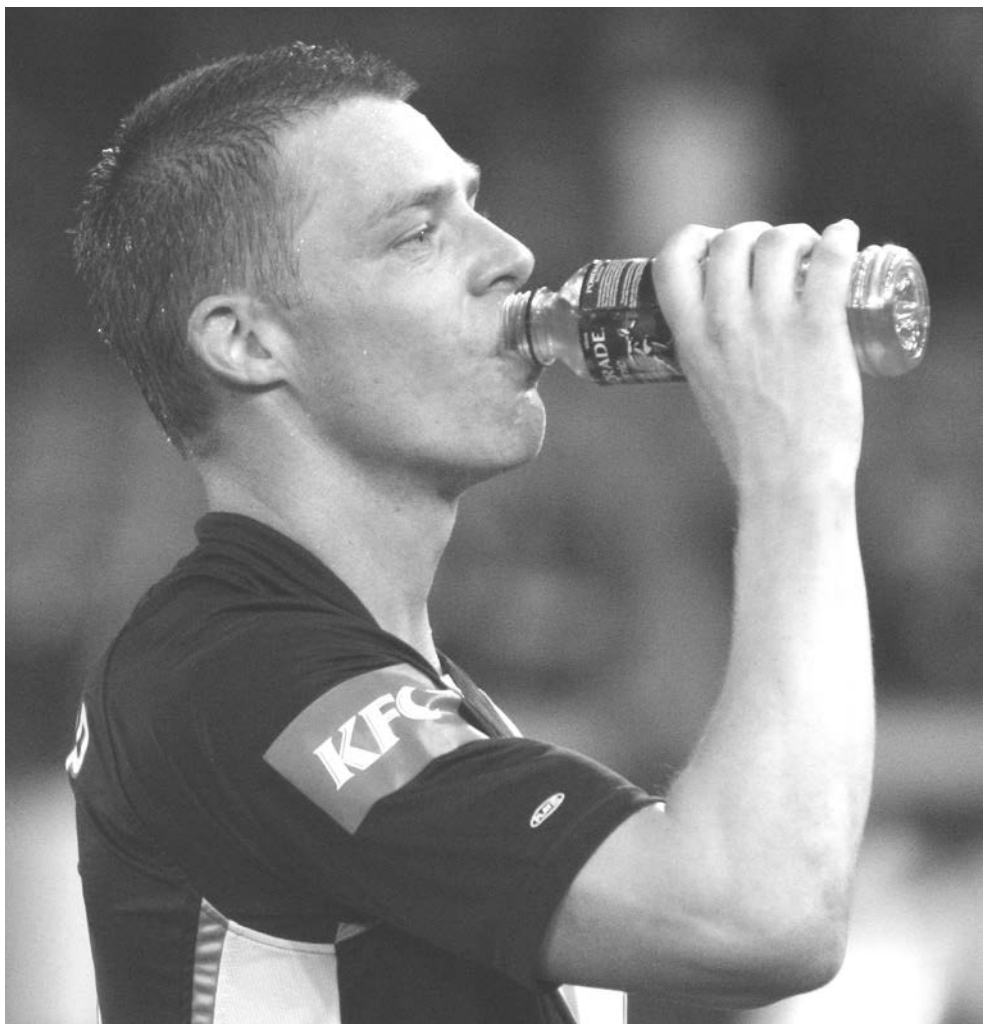
The Adelaide-Melbourne feud will take centre stage for the first time this season as both teams look to secure their thus-far unblemished records. Melbourne Victory have come out frenetically after their initial nil all draw with Sydney and punished the Phoenix and the Jets 4-2 and 5-0 respectively, reminiscent of their 2006 form. Adelaide United have had successful but uncharacteristically timid opening rounds, in particular their one all draw against Queensland Roar. Despite this United are sure to step up to the challenge as they face their old rivals for pole position once more.

Newcastle have the opportunity to finally beat Sydney FC and end a two year streak of concessions to the Sky Blues. Sydney FC have looked increasingly dangerous and having just dominated Perth Glory 5-2 is well on track to make the Finals again.

Perth Glory and Queensland Roar will scrap it out at Members Equity Stadium for some desperately needed points. Glory is coming last equal with the Phoenix on just one point while Roar are scarcely doing better with two. Queensland's saving grace in the last three games has been Scottish import Charlie Miller who has made his presence felt, scoring a goal in every game .

Despite making the finals in the Pre-Season Challenge Cup the Wellington Phoenix have made a shaky start to the season. They managed to draw in the first round to Queensland but then lost consecutive matches to Melbourne and Adelaide. Apart from the efforts of Shane Smeltz who has scored all three of the Phoenix's goals the team's cohesion and flair seem to be sadly lacking. Both teams have been plagued with a range of injuries and illness. Mariners key midfielder Ahmed Elrich ruptured a ligament in his knee last weekend and is out for the rest of the year while defender Dean Hefferman isn't expected to recover from his leg injury until November. The Phoenix clearly missed Flu-striken Shane Smeltz last week, suffering a 3-0 loss, their worst so far. In the words of their captain Andrew Durante "we were outplayed and outclassed all over the park". Still the pre-season result shows that they have the talent to beat the Central Coast Mariners if they can just inject some much needed vitality into their performance.

Of particular interest will be how Goalkeeper Mark Bosnich fares for the Mariners, having had time to settle back in to his old position, although whether the Phoenix can comprehensively test him remains to be seen. Bosnich recently signed a seven week contract with the Mariners after a seven year absence to replace suspended first choice Danny Vukovich. In what was a fantastic win against Queensland Roar last week Bosnich kept an adequate goal for the Mariners and was lucky he wasn't carded when he took down Massimo Murdocca in the box for a penalty. Keep an eye out for him though as he has made some stunning saves during his tumultuous career and Mariners manager Lawrie McKinna obviously believes he's capable of a few more.



Victory's Daniel Allsopp takes a well earned break after topping the scorers charts with four goals in three games. This Friday he torments the Adelaide United defence at the Telstra Dome

By Jonathan Chamberlain

Photo by John Punshon

STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Melbourne Victory	3	2	1	0	9	2	7	7
2 Sydney FC	3	2	1	0	8	4	4	7
3 Adelaide United	3	2	1	0	5	1	4	7
4 Central Coast Mariners	3	1	1	1	7	6	1	4
5 Queensland Roar	3	0	2	1	4	6	-2	2
6 Newcastle Jets	3	0	2	1	4	9	-5	2
7 Perth Glory	3	0	1	2	5	9	-4	1
8 Wellington Phoenix	3	0	1	2	3	8	-5	1

ROUND FOUR

MELBOURNE VICTORY
V
ADELAIDE UNITED
KO 8pm Friday 12th Sep
Telstra Dome

NEWCASTLE JETS
V
SYDNEY FC
KO 7pm Saturday 13th Sep
Energy Australia

WELLINGTON PHOENIX
V
CC MARINERS
KO 5pm Sunday 14th Sep
Westpac Stadium

PERTH GLORY
V
QLD ROAR
KO 3pm Sunday 14th August
Members Equity Stadium

AT THE TURNSTYLE

Club	Home Games	Average	Lowest	Highest	Total
Adelaide Utd	2	9,171	7.832	10,510	18,342
CC Mariners	1	10,932	10,932	10,932	10,932
Melb Victory	1	22,589	22,589	22,589	22.589
New Jets	1	16,022	16,022	16,022	16,022
Perth Glory	1	8,876	8,876	8,876	8,876
Qld Roar	2	12,473	12,185	12,761	24,946
Sydney FC	2	14,004	11,732	16,277	28,009
Well Phoenix	2	8,313	6,110	10,516	16,626
TOTAL	**12**	**12,195**	**6,110**	**22,589**	**146,342**

TOP SCORERS

4 – Danny Allsopp (MV)

3 – Steve Corica (SFC), Eugene Dadi (PG), Charlie Miller (QR), Shane Smeltz (WP)

2 – Shannon Cole (SFC), Cristiano (AU) Travis Dodd (AU), Joel Griffiths (NJ), Dylan Macallister (CCM) Sasho Petrovski (CCM), Matt Simon (CCM)

1 - Shannon Cole (SFC), Eugene Dadi (PG), Ney Fabiano (MV), Kevin Muscat (MV), Jade North (NJ), Nikita Rukavytsya (PG), Matt Simon (CCM), Adrian Trinidad (PG)

GEORGIES EAT PUDDING AND PIE!

VPL Hail Sunshine & Thunder Into Its Fold

The Sunshine Georgies, led by coach Andy O'Dell, have ensured they head into the Foxtel Cup in 2009 on the back of a five-game winning streak, and as the reigning premiers of the State League Division One.

The Georgies sealed their status as champions with a 2-0 victory over FC Clifton Hill at Kevin Bartlett Reserve, as the final round of games was completed on Saturday afternoon. With the league leaders knowing a single point was all that was required for the title of champions to be theirs, Sunshine burst out of the blocks, scoring early through Colin Azzopardi. Nick Harrhy then doubled the lead soon after, effectively handing the Georgies the championship by half time. With the second half standing between them and first place, Sunshine defended their lead strongly to take all three points.

However, due credit must also be given to Dandenong for their sensational effort to give chase to Sunshine, extending their unbeaten streak to an incredible eighteen matches with a 2-0 defeat of St Albans at George Andrews Reserve. While the match did not affect the Thunder's overall position with second place tied up, playing in front of their home crowd, Dandenong were keen to finish season 2008 in style. The first half did not pan out as planned though, with the Saints defending well. Although it was only a matter of time before the Thunder broke through, and after the break Joseph Di Iorio and Marcus Stergiopoulos found the back of the net to score Dandenong's fourteenth victory for the season, and in Di Iorio's case; a top-five finish in the league goalscorers table. The Saints, on the other hand, will be disappointed in finishing sixth in that they did not achieve more in a season where they were widely tipped to be pushing for promotion.

Springvale, meanwhile, have escaped relegation by the skin of their teeth, finishing ninth, one point clear of the tenth-placed Westgate. The White Eagles certainly did not help their cause when they fell 4-0 to the third-placed Bulleen at the Veneto Social Club, as the Royals celebrated an, on-the-whole, successful season. Already leading 4-0 at half time thanks to goals to Leonardo Catalano, Cameron Miles, Saso Becvinovski and Martin Mason, Springvale were merely playing for pride in the second half, which they managed to hang on to the remnants of with an improved defensive effort.

Westgate, though, will no doubt be inconsolable with the heart-breaking events which led to their downfall in finishing in the relegation zone, after sharing the spoils with the eighth-placed Langwarrin in a 1-1 draw at Lawton Park Reserve. Leading 1-0 at half time courtesy of Mebrahtom Yabio's goal, and seemingly destined to escape relegation, the unthinkable happened. In a repeat of every footballer's worst nightmare, an own goal slipped into the Westgate goal to bring the game back to level terms. With time quickly slipping by, Westgate became increasingly desperate, but it was not enough to find the elusive winner, leaving the visitors to rue the unfortunate occurrences which sees them falling down to State League Division Two.

Keilor Park have pulled off a massive upset win in their final game in Division One, defeating the high-flying Southern Stars 2-1 at Keilor Park Reserve, as the Stars finished their otherwise-brilliant season on a poor note with two successive losses. A scoreless first half seemingly reflected the lack of impact which this match carried, but the second half saw Keilor come out firing, with Grant Mussel scoring a double to conclude his side's brief spell in Division One on a high. While Thierry Boi did manage to score a late consolation goal for the Stars, it was not enough to take the win away from the home side.

There was no such fairytale finish for Kingston City though, with the fifth-placed Bentleigh Greens capping off another fine season, with a comfortable 2-0 win at Kingston Heath Soccer Complex. Goals either side of the break to Bentleigh's Alex Rojas and Lewis Karanicolas sealed the win for the Greens, who ensure City end the season with only four wins, a fact made worse by Kingston's status this season as a former Foxtel Cup side.

By Jeremy O'Neill

Photo by John Punshon

Georgies fans enjoyimg their afternoon at the Kevin Bartlett Reserve on Saturday

Anthony Bowsley (Sunshine Georgies) wins the header again Ozzie Kara (Clifton Hill)

Sunshine Georgies forward Peter Koutsoupias crashes over Clifton Hill keeper Abraham Staikouris

SL1 ROUND 22 RESULTS

Langwarrin 1 (Own Goal)
Westgate 1 (MA Yabio)

Keilor Park 2 (G Mussel 2)
Southern Stars 1 (T Boi)

Bulleen Royals 4 (L Catalano C Miles S Becvinovski M Mason)
Springvale White Eagles 0

Dandenong Thunder 2 (J Di Iorio M Stergiopoulos)
St Albans Saints 0

FC Clifton Hill 0
Sunshine Georgies 2
(C Azzopardi N Harrhy)

Bentleigh Greens 2 (A Rojas L Karanicolas)
Kingston City 0

SL1 FINAL STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Sunshine Georgies (C)	22	16	3	3	40	13	51
Dandenong Thunder (P)	22	14	6	2	50	18	48
Bulleen Royals	22	12	7	3	54	22	43
Southern Stars	22	12	3	7	34	28	39
Bentleigh Greens	22	10	6	6	34	27	36
St Albans Saints	22	8	4	10	28	34	28
FC Clifton Hill	22	7	5	10	26	41	26
Langwarrin	22	6	5	11	24	28	23
Springvale White Eagles	22	5	6	11	25	38	21
Westgate (R)	22	4	8	10	23	35	20
Keilor Park (R)	22	5	4	13	20	44	19
Kingston City (R)	22	4	1	17	20	50	13

The Honours

Champions: Sunshine Georgies
Runner Up: Dandenong Thunder
Relegated: Westgate, Keilor Park, Kingston City

TOP SCORERS

Becvinovski (Royals)	**12** games	**17** goals
Miles (Royals)	**7**	**13**
Nicholes (Langwarrin)	**9**	**12**
Davidson (Thunder)	**8**	**11**

RESERVES RESULTS

Langwarrin 16 Westgate 3, Keilor Park 3 Southern Stars 0, Bulleen Royals 5 Springvale White Eagles 2, Dandenong Thunder 1 St Albans Saints 1, FC Clifton Hill 0 Sunshine Georgies 4, Bentleigh Greens 10 Kingston City 1

RESERVES STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Bentleigh Greens	22	18	0	4	79	30	54
Langwarrin	22	15	3	4	76	30	48
Keilor Park	22	14	5	3	61	30	47
Bulleen Royals	22	14	2	6	55	25	44
FC Clifton Hill	22	11	3	8	50	41	36
Sunshine Georgies	22	8	8	6	41	27	31
Southern Stars	22	8	7	7	43	44	30
Westgate	22	5	2	15	28	76	17
St Albans Saints	22	3	8	11	37	54	16
Dandenong Thunder	21	4	4	13	40	61	15
Springvale White Eagles	21	3	5	13	31	62	14
Kingston City	22	3	3	16	30	91	12

PROVI LEAGUE NORTH WEST 2

ESSENDON UTD

The 2008 Essendon United championship team: Spiro Dimitropoulos, Adam Tennenini, Antonio Angerami, Robert Carchedi, Christos Arvanitakis, Vince Tartaglia, Andrew Imvriotis, Peter Koukoulis, Alex Dimopoulos, Adrian Giordano, Dominic Meddis, Chris Hatzikonstantinos, James Cassar, David Trifiletti, David Loschiavo, Mark Hadj, Michael Calandrella, Frank Giurleo, Daniel Mussel, James Triffiletti, Joe Fontana, Norm Mancuso (Coach), Vince Loschiavo (Assistant Coach).

The Mooney Valley municipality are toasting their newest Champions this week with Essendon United crowned kings of Provisional League 2 North West.

After defeating their nearest rival North City Lions 2-1 in the penultimate round, Essendon United completed a magnificent season finishing as undisputed champions on 51 points, 10 ahead of Northern Falcons who edged out North City on the final day to secure the second promotion spot. United went 14 games unbeaten between rounds 9-22 and overall amassed 15 wins, 6 draws and 1 loss. Prior to the capitulation of North City Lions in the final rounds of the season, they and Essendon United fought a tense two horse race for the title. The turning point were rounds 13 & 14 against Northern Falcons and Moreland United with United taking 6 points away from the two games, to the Lions 1. This allowed United some breathing space at the top of the table and its fair to say they never looked back.

Nothing is ever achieved without the drive and hunger to succeed and jubilant coach Norm Mancuso was first to commend his players on an extraordinary campaign. 'It was a long, hard, but successful season. Being able to set goalsand milestones that challenged players made them strive to achieve thischampionship' said Mancuso. This view was echoed by club captain Tony 'Dora' Angerami. Renowned for his high work ethic, Angerami praised his team mates commitment and highintensity whether it be at training or match day 'When the going got tough in the pre season, the boys knuckled down hard and put in thehard yards. Its all paid off in the way we have been able to run overteams in the latter part of games. A lot of our goals were scored thefinal minutes after we mounted persistent pressure on our opponents. Itshows that hard work really does pay off".

In what some may describe as a meteoric rise for a club that started from humble beginnings of the Thirds competition in 2006, club President Spiro Thalassinos is quick to downplay any sort of fairytale. Instead, he proudly reflects on three years of consistent hard work. 'For a club that began in 2005 to now, after three consecutive promotions to find itself in Provisional 1 is a true testament to all our members for their tireless work. We are all now reaping the rewards with this wonderful achievement'. This view was also shadowed by coach Mancuso ' The character and commitment of this playing group is testament to the spirit of this young club. I am proud to have played a part in this championship team'.

Players, coaches, sponsors and supporters will converge once more to toast the championship when the club hosts its presentation night later this month. It promises to be a memorable celebration.

BY ADAM TENNENINI

Seniors Final Standings

Brimbank City 1 (M Salkic) Melton 1 (JA Sobarzo), Darebin Utd 1 (A Dogan) Collingwood City 4 (F Papoutsis R Martin B Vasilopoulos 2), Moreland Utd 6 Keon Park 1, Northern Falcons 5 (M Monaci H Stamatiadis M Vizzini 2 A Le Page) West Preston 3 (T Emtsis 2 S Pouniotis), Bell Park 3 (WA Bowden 2 D Nelson) North City Lions 2 (R Nedelkov FA Cseh), Essendon Utd 1 (A Imvriotis) Hoppers Crossing 1 (Own Goal)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Essendon Utd	**22**	**15**	**6**	**1**	**45**	**13**	**51**
Northern Falcons	22	12	5	5	51	20	41
North City Lions	22	12	5	5	51	31	41
Moreland Utd	22	12	5	5	47	28	41
Collingwood City	22	12	5	5	32	21	41
West Preston	22	11	2	9	44	40	35
Bell Park	22	8	3	11	34	37	27
Hoppers Crossing	22	7	5	10	25	36	26
Darebin Utd	22	7	2	13	28	49	23
Melton	22	6	3	13	35	43	21
Keon Park	22	4	6	12	24	44	18

The Honours

Champions: Essendon United
Runner Up: Northern Falcons
Relegated: Darebin Utd, Melton, Keon Park

Top Scorers

Antonio Napolitano	Moreland United	15
Robert Nedelkov	North City Lions	15
Andrew Le Page	Northern Falcons	13
Troy Emtsis	West Preston	11

Reserves Final Standings

Brimbank City 4 Melton 4, Darebin Utd 0 Collingwood City 6, Moreland Utd 4 Keon Park 2, Northern Falcons 1 West Preston 1, Bell Park 1 North City Lions 2, Essendon Utd 5 Hoppers Crossing 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
North City Lions	**22**	**16**	**3**	**3**	**50**	**16**	**50**
Essendon Utd	22	14	4	4	53	26	46
Collingwood City	22	12	5	5	46	28	41
Northern Falcons	21	11	3	7	53	39	36
Moreland Utd	22	9	5	8	46	53	32
Melton	22	8	6	8	42	40	30
Keon Park	22	7	6	9	37	38	27
West Preston	21	7	5	9	39	44	26
Hoppers Crossing	22	6	6	10	29	39	23
Bell Park	22	7	1	14	41	44	22
Brimbank City	22	5	5	12	36	62	20

Seniors Final Standings

Dandenong Sparrows 6 (T Ithier 3 DE Schulberg G Leveque D Ithier) Old Brighton Grammarians 1 (J Lake), Mornington 2 (A Halikias T Carmichael) Keysborough 1 (M Roberts 2), Carrum Utd 2 (M Vella D Cori) Caulfield Utd 1 (R Pititto), Old Camberwell Grammar 2 (G Loupos J Bush) Lyndale Utd 2 (R Roslan D King), Berwick Kings 0 Riversdale 0, Old Trinity Grammarians 0 Whitehorse Utd 1 (K Tavrou)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Mornington	**22**	**12**	**6**	**4**	**49**	**31**	**42**
Old Camberwell Grammar	22	12	6	4	46	28	42
Whitehorse Utd	22	10	6	6	35	21	36
Riversdale	22	10	4	8	58	40	34
Lyndale Utd	22	10	3	9	41	41	33
Dandenong Sparrows	22	9	4	9	44	43	31
Old Brighton Grammarians	22	8	5	9	40	52	29
Caulfield Utd	22	8	2	12	37	46	26
Berwick Kings	22	7	5	10	24	38	26
Carrum Utd	22	7	4	11	34	45	25
Keysborough	22	6	6	10	35	37	24
Old Trinity Grammarians	22	6	3	13	26	47	21

The Honours

Champions: Mornington
Runner Up: Old Camberwell Grammar
Relegated: Carrum Utd, Keysborough, Old Trinity

Top Scorers

Dougal Begg	Riversdale 16
Ted Ithier	Dandenong Sparrows 16
Ruzaini Roslan	Lyndale United 13
Joshua Del Rio	Old Trinity Grammarians 12

Reserves Final Standings

Dandenong Sparrows 1 Old Brighton Grammarians 0, Mornington 1 Keysborough 2, Carrum Utd 1 Caulfield Utd 2, Old Camberwell Grammar 1 Lyndale Utd 2, Berwick Kings 2 Riversdale 5, Old Trinity Grammarians 0 Whitehorse Utd 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Riversdale	22	18	2	2	65	26	56
Caulfield Utd	22	15	0	7	65	33	45
Old Camberwell Grammar	22	12	3	7	48	26	39
Old Brighton Grammarians	22	12	0	10	47	41	36
Keysborough	22	10	3	9	48	37	33
Whitehorse Utd	22	10	3	9	36	27	33
Lyndale Utd	22	9	4	9	40	39	31
Mornington	22	9	3	10	42	41	30
Dandenong Sparrows	22	9	1	12	41	48	28
Old Trinity Grammarians	22	7	4	11	33	48	25
Carrum Utd	22	6	3	13	36	55	21
Berwick Kings	22	2	0	20	33	113	6

MORNINGTON

PROVI LEAGUE SOUTH EAST 2

Mornington started the season with the basis of last years squad intact, but the need to sign some new faces was obvious. A quality keeper was required and Louis Jones from Pines' U21's was targeted and recruited early on to give a huge boost to the squad. Brian Skelly, Alex Halikias, Mathew Cameron and Thomas Schneider were other additions to the squad but all had not played for around 2 year. In the week before the season started Craig Wright also signed from Berwick.

Mornington started with a fantastic come from behind 3-2 victory over old foes Caulfied. Some up and down form followed before another season defining 5-0 home win over ladder leaders Berwick pushed the Seagulls to within touching distance of the top of the ladder.

Craig Wright was lost for 2 months with a dislocated elbow but this was offset with the signing of premier League player Nicholas Waite from Frankston Pines who immediately improved the side. Young gun Nathan Yole, promoted from last years U15's, was the surprise of the season, keeping the other more experienced strikers out of the side for long periods and provided a real spark for the team leading into the half way mark of the season. In a squad with 6 strikers, some occasional juggling and squad rotation was required but credit to all the players who had a fantastic selfless attitude all season.

The second half of the season started terribly with a 3-1 away loss to Caulfield, but the follow up 5-1 victory over Lyndale was a sign of things to come as the side showed great resilience all year by following all 4 defeats with strong wins the following weeks. The 2-2 away draw to Riversdale showed how far the team had come since the start of the year and again gave the boys confidence heading into the run home.

The massive game of the season was another top of the table clash at home to Camberwell, and Mornington was rocked on its heels with a disappointing 6-2 loss that could have turned the season sour, but again the squad responded in the following weeks to hang in there. With results constantly going our way promotion was secured on the second last day with a 2-2 draw away to Old Brighton, and then the Championship was won on the last day of the year with a stunning 30 yard strike 2 minutes from time from Centre half Tom Carmichael for a 2-1 win.

A lot of credit needs to go to the players, stalwarts John Watson and Glenn Tewierik who provided the grunt, Dan Waite, Nathan Yole and Tom Carmichael who stepped up from reserves football the year before. Louis kept things tidy between the sticks and the players coming back from their layoff all managed to get through the season and provide important contributions. Captain Brett van Zenden was solid again and Craig Wright and Nick Waite provided that attacking spark at crucial times throughout the year.

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STATE LEAGUE NORTH WEST 2

PASCOE VALE

Vasco Tilovski (TM) Luc Trani (Coach) Vitale Ferrante; Steven Tribuzio, Morco Tolli, Chris Nedanovski, Matt Collits, Wes Coles, Daniel Tribuzio, Daniel Genoverse, Frank Serratore, John Sansone, Julian Grech.
Second Row:Michael Talevski, Tanimu Tijani, Ahmed Azzam, Zlate Matlioski, Ricky Castro, Rocky Di Vitto, Luke Blackwood, Matt Xerri, Chris Raponi, Jim Mpatzarakoudis.

Pascoe Vale Soccer Club are finally Champions of Division 2 North-West in 2008! It has been a long and heart breaking 8 year road for the small family orientated Northern suburbs club but the injection of an experienced coach and talented players in the pre- season has finally seen Pascoe Vale climb the mountain that seemed insurmountable only 12 months ago.

"At the end of last season, our coach Vitale Ferrante recognised that a more experienced individual was available and for the betterment of the club, he elected to stand down to give the club the best possible chance to move forward. That is what people at our club are like, they put the club before themselves and Vitale Ferrante is no better example." President, Lou Tona commented.

With Luciano Trani on board, the club and players went through a mini transformation that would see the professionalism within the playing group lift.

"It was difficult at the start to adjust to Luciano's ways. His focus was 100% on the League title from January and the players had to work harder than they have ever had to before to prove to Luc that they wanted to be on the same path to glory. The pre-season was one of the hardest we have completed and really tested our mettle", Club Captain, Rocky Di Vitto added.

With the addition of players such as Wes Coles and Frank Serratore from Fawkner, John-Adam Sansone from Essendon, Ricky Castro from Western Suburbs and Marco Tolli from Altona East, who were asked to play along side experienced campaigners of the likes of Zlate Matlioski, Daniel Tribuzio, Danny Genovesi, Vitale Ferrante and Club Captain, Rocky Di Vitto the building blocks were in place to have a successful season, and that is exactly what happened with Pascoe Vale going through the season with only one loss, in Round 22 after the Championship was won and only conceding an unbelievable 9 goals for the 22 games.

Asked what was the key to Pascoe Vale's success this year, President Lou Tona added, "They say strikers win matches but defences win Championships and that seems to be the case with us this year. But the key to our success is that the boys attacked as a unit and defended as a unit. Defender, Daniel Tribuzio was telling me that he has felt that he has done less defending this year than any previous year where we have conceded more goals. Our defence has started from our strikers and midfielders and they have been the key in us being able to grind out results and that all comes down to the tactics and knowledge of our coach, Luciano Trani. He has been a master acquisition for this club and I am so proud of him and our boys. They are magnificent!!"

In addition to the on ground success of the club, Pascoe Vale have been aptly supported by people and sponsors off the pitch, Lou Tona mentioned. "I cannot stress the importance of people at our club. Our major sponsor, Adriatic Furniture and Joe Catalano have supported this club for 10 years and continue to give. We cannot thank them enough. They and all our sponsors and volunteers have been as much the key to our Championship win as the people that have done the job on the park."

So what now for Pascoe Vale? They now enter unchartered territory being in the highest league they have ever competed in in their 40 year history.

"We have plans in place but overall the most important aspect of our club is our culture and we will not change that for anyone or any league we are in. We will recruit but recruitment will fall in line with the criteria we set, good people who are good players that are willing to play for the club. This has held us in good stead in our history and I am sure it will in the future. We just cannot wait to compete"

Ominous words from the President and it looks like exciting times ahead for Pascoe Vale. We look forward to following the fortunes of this respected club in Division 1 in 2009.

Seniors Final Standings

North Geelong Warriors 0 Brunswick City 1 (J Vouloumanos), Altona East Phoenix 1 (L Abalos) Moreland City 2 (R Marcen R Dinse), Williamstown 1 Altona City 1, Thomastown Devils 3 (L Santilli 2 C Govas) Werribee City 7 (M Collins 2 S Panebianco T Batur 2 A Barbieri), Pascoe Vale 1 (S Tribuzio) Ballarat Red Devils 2 (J Romein SJ Romein), Maribyrnong Greens 2 (J Suric H Topal) Cairnlea 12 (A Bakri 3 S Sozer E Koc 3 SS Bubulj 2 A Ikiz 3)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Pascoe Vale	**22**	**12**	**9**	**1**	**26**	**9**	**45**
Werribee City	22	13	4	5	42	23	43
Altona East Phoenix	22	11	6	5	31	17	39
North Geelong Warriors	21	10	6	5	32	16	36
Brunswick City	22	9	7	6	24	18	34
Ballarat Red Devils	22	9	7	6	32	34	34
Williamstown	22	8	4	10	29	28	28
Thomastown Devils	22	8	3	11	38	41	27
Altona City	22	7	6	9	19	31	27
Moreland City	22	5	7	10	27	33	22
Cairnlea	21	5	4	12	35	41	19
Maribyrnong Greens	22	1	3	18	18	62	6

The Honours

Champions: Pascoe Vale
Runner Up: Werribee City
Relegated: Moreland City, Cairnlea, Maribyrnong Greens

Top Scorers

Martin Collins	Werribee City	15
Luca Santilli	Thomastown Devils	14
Bozidar Lojanica	Altona East Phoenix	13
Daniel Dragicevic	Nth Geelong Warriors	11

Reserves Standings

North Geelong Warriors 0 Brunswick City 2, Altona East Phoenix 0 Moreland City 3, Williamstown 0 Altona City 4, Thomastown Devils 3 Werribee City 4, Pascoe Vale 2 Ballarat Red Devils 1, Maribyrnong Greens 1 Cairnlea 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Moreland City	**22**	**18**	**1**	**3**	**67**	**27**	**55**
Cairnlea	22	15	1	6	61	42	46
Thomastown Devils	22	13	5	4	53	34	44
Altona City	22	11	4	7	49	33	37
Werribee City	22	10	3	9	54	42	33
Brunswick City	22	10	3	9	41	37	33
North Geelong Warriors	22	8	2	12	41	44	26
Ballarat Red Devils	22	8	1	13	33	48	25
Pascoe Vale	22	8	1	13	33	40	25
Williamstown	22	6	7	9	30	41	25
Altona East Phoenix	22	5	5	12	26	41	20
Maribyrnong Greens	22	3	1	18	17	88	10

Seniors Final Standings

Knox City 4 (A Edgar N Veljovic 2 K Suat) Waverley Wanderers 0, Eastern Lions 0 Port Melbourne 0, Doncaster Rovers 3 (S Murat 3) South Springvale 2 (I Diniotis K Harbis), Diamond Valley Utd (P Nicolaou A Lagoulis JM Carter) Stonnington City , Northcote City 5 (T Triantafilopoulos T Rixon 3 D Archimandritis) Chelsea 2 (Z Tudor I Bajo), Casey Comets 3 (C Stewart D Terek Own Goal) Peninsula Strikers 2 (CA Di Petta SM Vernon)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Northcote City	**22**	**17**	**1**	**4**	**52**	**24**	**52**
Knox City	22	14	3	5	48	19	45
Doncaster Rovers	22	12	6	4	47	24	42
Chelsea	22	11	2	9	35	34	35
Casey Comets	22	9	6	7	30	30	33
Stonnington City	21	10	2	9	42	35	32
Diamond Valley Utd	21	9	5	7	35	39	32
South Springvale	22	8	6	8	32	30	30
Eastern Lions	22	7	4	11	24	28	25
Port Melbourne	22	5	6	11	23	38	21
Peninsula Strikers	22	4	3	15	22	46	15
Waverley Wanderers	22	2	2	18	16	59	8

The Honours

Champions: Northcote City
Runner Up: Knox City
Relegated: Port Melbourne, Peninsula Strikers, Waverley Wanderers

Top Scorers

Trent Rixon	Northcote City	19
Daniel Veljovic	Knox City	15
Ilias Diniotis	South Springvale	14
Paul Madondo	Stonnington City	10

Reserves Final Standings

Knox City 5 Waverley Wanderers 3, Eastern Lions 7 Port Melbourne 0, Doncaster Rovers 6 South Springvale 1, Diamond Valley Utd 3 Stonnington City 1, Northcote City 6 Chelsea 1, Casey Comets 4 Peninsula Strikers 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Doncaster Rovers	**22**	**14**	**3**	**5**	**50**	**24**	**45**
Knox City	22	12	8	2	43	24	44
Eastern Lions	22	13	2	7	53	31	41
Peninsula Strikers	22	11	4	7	40	28	37
Casey Comets	22	9	6	7	43	37	33
Northcote City	22	8	8	6	46	35	32
Chelsea	22	8	4	10	39	47	28
Waverley Wanderers	22	7	5	10	36	45	26
South Springvale	22	7	3	12	25	40	24
Stonnington City	22	5	5	12	30	49	20
Port Melbourne	22	4	7	11	28	53	19

NORTHCOTE CITY

STATE LEAGUE SOUTH EAST 2

Back Row: Jim Vissaris (physio), Harry Kinigopoulos, Jim Triantopoulos, Trent Rixon, Chris Petropoulos, Kon Fotiadis, Leonardo Paliza, Antoni Jankovski, John Theofilopoulos, Jim Makro (President), Peter Kotsiris (Team Manager)
Middle Row: Abdul Rauf Samad, Tass Tzoulis, Marco Rosano, Eddie Soares, Jerry Lazaris, Peter Tsolakis (Coach), George Papadopoulos (Captain), Alex Gymnopoulos (Assistant Coach), Jim Archimandritis, Nick Georgakopoulos, Tass Papadopoulos.
Front Row: Andre Andrade, Jason Di, Burak Kocak, Dimitre Moshis. Absent: Simon Groom

Season 2008 was set out to be a year of redemption for all involved at the Northcote City Soccer.

From administration to senior coach Peter Tsolakis and the entire senior playing roster the focus was to put the disappointment of relegation in 2006 and the forgettable 2007 season in Division 2 behind them and to claim a the Second Division S/E championship and return to Division1 in 2009.

That the goal was achieved with 2 weeks of the season remaining, a testament to Coach Tsolakis and his team who were quite easily the best team in the league over the 22 weeks.

Many felt the turning point of the season was when the FFV tribunal overturned a 1-0 home loss to Diamond Valley in Round 3 to a 3-0 win for Northcote after the club successfully appealed and won a hearing against the Valley for playing a suspended player in Kam Simsek in that fixture.

From Round 5 until Round 15 however it was were the championship was decided as the class of the Northcote City team took a stranglehold on the competition securing 10 wins and a draw from 11 games opening up an 11 point gap on its nearest rivals in Knox City and Doncaster Rovers.

Even 3 successive losses did not dampen the confidence as the gap was narrowed to 4 points b Knox City, but Northcote showed their true character and class winning their last 5 games and thus securing the Division 2 S/E championship from Knox City by 7 points and sending itself back to Division 1.

Their were many highlights for the blue and whites in season 2008, the recruiting of Antoni Jankovski form Kingston City and Eddie Soares from Sunshine George Cross and the arrival of Leonardo Paliza a former Peruvian 1st Division player who walked in off the street and asked for a trial strengthened the squad from last season, but no doubt the brilliance of Trent Rixon in front of goal scoring 19 goals was in many opinions the difference between securing promotion and being an also ran.

In saying all that it is fair to say that full credit must go to coach Tsolakis, a superstar player in his day in the old NSL who was able to maintain his teams focus and demeanour for the entire season, he had them playing with flair, commitment and most of all passion and belief, four characteristics that no doubt held his squad in good stead and surely were the major factors behind winning the league and gaining promotion back to Division 1.

STATE LEAGUE NORTH WEST 3

GEELONG RANGERS

Back Row (L-R) Juma Wade, Harry Long (assistant coach), Scott Trebilcock, John Ramos, Dave Valys, Dylan Baker, Arain Veljan, Jason Pickles, Stuart Begg, James Blackburn, Ben Muir, Dave Ellis, Danny Ortiz, Jim Henderson.
Middle Row (L-R) Dave Schofield, Matt Clarke, Cedo Rakic, Drew Corry, Troy Hardy, Rob Noggler (senior coach) Scott Davison, Ron Clayson, Johnathon Ryan, Daniel Earley, Evan Black,
Front Row (L-R) Jason Malesic, Marcus Van der Chys, Brady Black, Matthew Long, Elton Savice, Brian Conn, Jamie Tran, Frankie Quaranta, Darren McCullum

GEELONG Rangers won the North West Division Three title in controversial fashion in a do or die clash in bright sunshine in front a good crowd against Sydenham Park at Myers Reserve 3-2 on Saturday.

Celebrations went on long into the night after Rangers overcame a dogged Sydenham side that came back from a three goal deficit and played much of the game with ten men after having a player sent of in the first term.

Both sides had already won promotion and the battle was on for the title. Rangers needed only a point and Sydenham needed a win to claim the league championship.

The Geelong side settled first on the superb surface and the league's leading goalscorer Troy Hardy scored from a Scott Davison cross with fans still arriving at the ground.

Hardy headed home stunning a Sydenham side that should have known better than to give the big target man an early opening.

Rangers bouyed by a big home support was bubbling and surged forward in numbers catching Sydneham early and pinning the visitor back in its own area.

Hardy made it two and then one of the league's other leading marksmen James Blackburn made three. In between Sydneham had a player sent off after deliberate handball.

It was an all action game and Rangers goalkeeper Brady Black turned villain when he was judged to have fouled a Park striker in the penalty area. The custodian made amends by saving the spot-kick The keeper then tipped a shot onto the post as Park came back with a vengeance.

Rangers looked to have the game won with a three goal cushion against ten men, Sydenham had other ideas.

Rangers coach Rob Noggler warned his players at half time that it was going to be a tough second half and that's how it turned out with Sydenham pulling one back and converting a penalty with 20 minutes to go.The ten men pushed Rangers back and Black was again the hero with some stunning saves.

Park advanced in search of a victory but Rangers then found space against the ten men on the flanks and Davision and Blackburn both went close as Rangers used their numerical advantage for the first time in the game.

There were ugly scenes on the sidelines with the visiting fans being more than vocal and there's certain to be a report to the FFV.

But in the end the day and the night belonged to Rangers who are probably the only side in this division not paying their players,

It was a triumph not only for the home side but for a youth policy that is the envy of every side in the Geelong region. Club president Paul Millar said Rangers was not about buying league titles it was a club that promoted youth through pride in the shirt and pride in the 53-year-old club's history.

"There were members here today that have been a part of this club since it was formed, they watch us home and away and then we have a new generation that's coming through, there's a pride in this club that is the envy of our local rivals from the kids to the seniors they never say die," Millar said.

Coach Noggler, in his first season in the club said the spirit was outstanding, the players never stopped, whatever the opposition, and it was an honour to be the man guiding the club up a division.

Rangers are now in the same league as North Geelong, a side that has been the yardstick of Geelong soccer for decades, the Myers Reserve side now wants that mantle.

Seniors Final Standings

Geelong 3 (M Gorosito J Ikanovic 2) Lalor 3 (D Christou 2 P Romano), Banyule City 1 (V Cincotta) Sunbury Utd 4 (V Ierardo J Hearns P Shipp Own Goal), La Trobe University 5 (A De Luca L Lidestri C Clark 2 N Vissaris 2 L Lavalle) Lalor Utd 0, North Sunshine Eagles 3 (G Muslia 2 A Bibaj) Laverton Park 1 (V De La Plaza), Geelong Rangers 3 (T Hardy 2 J Blackburn) Sydenham Park 2 (D Spiteri R Taleski), Yarraville Glory 7 (S Terzakis M Nastic 2 A Vatzakis 2 G Mitas A Tsirtsakis) Westvale 1 (H Timotheou)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Geelong Rangers	**22**	**12**	**7**	**3**	**52**	**32**	**43**
Sydenham Park	22	10	8	4	39	23	38
Westvale	22	10	5	7	35	35	35
Banyule City	22	9	5	8	23	30	32
Geelong	22	8	7	7	44	32	31
North Sunshine Eagles	21	8	6	7	34	33	30
Lalor	22	7	11	4	31	26	29
La Trobe University	22	7	7	8	31	30	28
Yarraville Glory	22	7	7	8	30	30	28
Lalor Utd	21	7	6	8	28	36	27
Sunbury Utd	22	5	6	11	29	40	21
Laverton Park	22	2	3	17	17	46	9

The Honours

Champions: Geelong Rangers
Runner Up: Sydenham Park
Relegated: Lalor United, Sunbury United, Laverton Park

Top Scorers

Troy Hardy	Geelong Rangers	20
Jasmin Ikanovic	Geelong	20
James Blackburn	Geelong Rangers	18
Ceri Clark	La Trobe University	12

Reserves Final Standings

Geelong 3 Lalor 0, Banyule City 4 Sunbury Utd 2, La Trobe University 5 Lalor Utd 1, North Sunshine Eagles 3 Laverton Park 3, Geelong Rangers 6 Sydenham Park 0, Yarraville Glory 1 Westvale 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Geelong	22	17	2	3	63	22	53
La Trobe University	22	15	3	4	52	19	48
Westvale	22	13	2	7	46	38	41
Sunbury Utd	22	11	5	6	44	22	38
Sydenham Park	22	11	5	6	45	38	38
Lalor	22	10	3	9	49	33	30
Banyule City	22	8	1	13	37	51	25
North Sunshine Eagles	22	6	5	11	42	48	23
Geelong Rangers	22	6	4	12	46	49	22
Yarraville Glory	22	6	2	14	23	72	20
Lalor Utd	22	6	1	15	28	53	19
Laverton Park	22	5	3	14	29	59	18

MORWELL PEGASUS

STATE LEAGUE SOUTH EAST 3

Starting from back left: Chris Cairns, Luke Vanlambarrt, Paul Byrne, Dennis Mustac, Frank Albanese, Mark Oliver, Matt McDermott, Chris Repetowski.
Front from left: Conor Clarke, Hayden Ross-Shultz, Clayton Bell, Michael Bonnefin, Joshua Tanti, Jarrod Pirotta, Daniel Cairns.
Absent: Captain, Damien Cassar.

Morwell Pegasus capped a magnificent promotion season by winning the State League Division 3 South East title by four points from Heatherton United.

It was the first title Pegasus has won in 10 years after winning a Provisional League title in the late 1990s.

This season's success was achieved on the back of an unbeaten run which stretched three months, from late April to late July, which put Pegs in pole position which they never surrendered.

Pegasus were the best performed side in an attacking sense scoring 50 goals for the season and had the equal best defence, only conceding 27 goals.

In a very good team effort it's hard to single out individuals for special praise but striker Frank Albanese deserves recognition for a wonderful season in which he reached the 20 goal mark and led the front line superbly with his hold up play.

Playing coach Clayton Bell was also crucial leading the club to the title in his first full season as coach. His experience and leadership was instrumental as he managed what is a fairly young squad and had to deal with the fact that some of the squad did not live locally and could not attend every training session.

The style of play that Pegs exhibited was also very impressive attacking football, looking to score goals as was seen with some big results, a 4-1 win away at Berwick, a 7-1 triumph at Doveton and a 6-1 victory at home to Brandon Park.

The club is hopeful it will continue to produce this type of football again next season as they return to State League Division 2 after a four year absence.

Seniors Final Standings

Boroondara Eagles 2 (G Jones M Gulino) Croydon City Arrows 1 (NA Gatzonis), Brandon Park 1 (A Mashoian) Sandringham City 2 (T Papadopoulos Own Goal), Morwell Pegasus 3 (F Albanese 2 CT Bell) Endeavour Utd 2 (M Kirmaci 2), Southern Suburbs 5 (N Rossios 2 DA Mota S Patsias H Solomon) Heatherton Utd 1 (M Skenderovic), Springvale City 1 Berwick City 3 (M Nitz J Fernand OA Mejias)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Morwell Pegasus	**22**	**14**	**4**	**4**	**50**	**27**	**46**
Heatherton Utd	22	13	3	6	40	34	42
Springvale City	22	10	3	9	29	34	33
Berwick City	22	9	5	8	35	32	32
Southern Suburbs	22	10	2	10	35	35	32
Sandringham City	22	9	4	9	42	35	31
Croydon City Arrows	22	8	5	9	31	24	29
Brandon Park	22	7	6	9	33	34	27
North Caulfield	21	6	9	6	26	27	27
Boroondara Eagles	22	8	2	12	33	38	26
Doveton	21	7	5	9	34	49	26
Endeavour Utd	22	3	6	13	24	43	15

The Honours

Champions: Morwell Pegasus
Runner Up: Heatherton United
Relegated: Booroondara Lions, Doveton, Endeavour United

Top Scorers

Frank Albanese	Morwell Pegasus	20
Oran Harel	Sandringham City	13
Jusuf Pekmezovic	Heatherton United	13
Leon Buhic	Doveton	11

Reserves Final Standings

Boroondara Eagles 0 Croydon City Arrows 2, Brandon Park 2 Sandringham City 3, Morwell Pegasus 2 Endeavour Utd 1, Southern Suburbs 3 Heatherton Utd 2, Springvale City 0 Berwick City 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Sandringham City	22	17	3	2	56	19	54
Boroondara Eagles	22	14	4	4	37	18	46
Croydon City Arrows	21	13	3	5	42	16	42
Berwick City	22	12	5	5	57	32	41
Endeavour Utd	22	12	0	10	41	38	36
North Caulfield	21	10	2	9	42	27	32
Southern Suburbs	22	9	2	11	33	42	29
Brandon Park	22	8	4	10	40	35	28
Morwell Pegasus	21	7	5	9	35	31	26
Doveton	21	5	7	9	26	32	22
Heatherton Utd	22	4	1	17	20	66	13

PROVI LEAGUE NORTH WEST 1

HUME UNITED

Hume United started its first official season in year 98 competing in Amateur 3 under the Amateur Soccer federation of Victoria. The teams first ground was Upfield Secondary College's soccer oval.

The year the club was formed Hume United S.C had finished second in its league and was promoted to Amateur 2. Had competed in Amateur 2 for a year but had moved to Broadmeadows Valley Park to play. After the season ended in year 1999 we finished 4th in the league but due to being really competitive and we were rewarded to pay in Amateur 1. In year 2000, 2001 and 2002 we competed in Amateur 1 but was always up in the top five every year.

In the meantime since year 2000 to 2003, for 3 years in a row we applied to play in the then named Victorian Soccer Federation Provisional League 3. Our applications in 2000, 2001 and 2002 were all rejected. However as we were really committed and wanted to perform in higher leagues we applied again in year 2003 and this time as we were more planned we were excepted to the VSF. In the meantime our aim was to have a nice facility and ground so that we can improve.

Years of near misses were likely to be erased in seasons 2008 with every player carrying the weight of their duties, which earned the promotion and championship of the Provisional 1 N/W league. Not only did the club want to finally earn promotion, it wanted to do it in style by finishing on top of the ladder with the premiership. The committee at Hume United, the guys who are there every day of the week looking after the club, sweeping out the rooms after the game finished, they are there on a Saturday at 10 in the morning marking the lines, getting out drinks ready ... these are the guys who've got families and jobs and ride with the team on wins and losses had a more professional approach this season. Hume United's willingness to get its hands dirty is the difference between the double delight and yet another near miss.

The players oozed confidence and showed no mental frailties to its opposition on the outside. In the eyes of most pundits, a water-tight defence is what won the championships, and the United back half is top of the class having conceded only 18 goals - an average of less than one per game. Hume United Committee would like to thank all the players for their hard work and a memorable year – thanks guys.

Seniors Final Standings

Western Eagles 2 (P Michalski M Grixti) Melbourne City 1 (M Galvan), South Yarra 2 (S Crossan AM Belton) Avondale Heights 2 (M Jancic A Calenda), Corio 0 Elwood City 2 (B Harmer J Fyfe), Melbourne Tornado 0 Melbourne University Rangers 7 (V Conroy A Griffith 2 M Thancanamootoo DJ Greenwood 3), Whittlesea Utd 2 (S Mirik T Altanhan) Glenroy 1 (S Bebic), Plenty Valley Lions 1 (C Kirkopoulos) Hume Utd 1 (T Markovski)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Hume Utd	**22**	**14**	**6**	**2**	**50**	**19**	**48**
Melbourne University Rangers	22	13	2	7	44	27	41
Whittlesea Utd	22	11	5	6	35	29	38
Glenroy	22	12	4	6	42	27	37
South Yarra	22	10	5	7	34	23	35
Elwood City	22	9	4	9	39	39	31
Corio	22	9	3	10	22	32	30
Western Eagles	22	8	5	9	38	33	29
Melbourne City	22	7	5	10	31	34	26
Plenty Valley Lions	22	7	3	12	32	40	24
Avondale Heights	22	5	6	11	31	35	21

The Honours

Champions: Hume United
Runner Up: Melbourne Uni Rangers
Relegated: Melbourne City, PV Lions, Avondale Heights

Top Scorers

Marin Jancic	Avondale Heights	12
Ante Kranjinovic	Glenroy	12
William Sismanis	Hume United	11
Steven Crossan	South Yarra	10

Reserves Final Standings

Western Eagles 1 Melbourne City 1, South Yarra 4 Avondale Heights 1, Corio 2 Elwood City 2, Melbourne Tornado 0 Melbourne University Rangers 1, Whittlesea Utd 4 Glenroy 3, Plenty Valley Lions 5 Hume Utd 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Melbourne University Rangers	**22**	**18**	**2**	**2**	**56**	**10**	**56**
South Yarra	22	18	2	2	57	19	56
Plenty Valley Lions	22	13	3	6	41	26	42
Avondale Heights	22	9	6	7	38	33	33
Hume Utd	21	7	6	8	39	40	27
Elwood City	21	7	4	10	37	39	24
Western Eagles	22	7	3	12	23	36	24
Corio	22	6	6	10	30	49	24
Melbourne City	22	6	5	11	25	31	23
Whittlesea Utd	21	7	3	11	25	38	23
Glenroy	21	7	2	12	31	43	20
Melbourne Tornado	22	4	0	18	21	59	12

NOBLE PARK FC

PROVI LEAGUE SOUTH EAST 1

Back front: Coach Dejan Stevancevic, Sandor Rind, Christopher Durand, Nebojsa Vukosavljevic, Darko Stojanovic, Nemanja Samardzic, Martin Kinski, Gordan Mrdic,Manager Vladimir Sember, President Ljubo Djekic
Front row:Zoltan Seci, Zoran Vukas, Tome Racunica, Darko Djuric, Dragan Zavisin, Leonardo Trebbia, Boris Mijatovic

I just want to say a few words about this season, which has finished in the best possible way. A few weeks before the season started, the committee and I made the decision to try to make promotion for the club and that was our motivation through the whole season. We brought to the club a few very experienced players and that mix of experience and young players was very successful. Of course, during the season we faced a tough period and that was the most challenging time for me and for my team. Most of the time, we were playing a brilliant and very mature game and that's the result of having a team and players absolutely focused from the first game to the last to do a very successful season for the club and to make the people and supporters of the club very happy. We finished the season with 51 points which is an absolutely incredible result if compared to the last season winner, who finished the season with 43 points. Last couple of weeks of the season was a very interesting period, because four teams play with equal chance to get promoted. Our game against Monbulk soccer club which we played at our grounds was probably the most dramatic game in the whole season and we found out only after the referees last whistle we finished on the top position and that game I won't forget for the rest of my life. Once again I just want to say thank you to all my players, to my committee, and to the supporters because we made this historic moment together.

By Dejan Stevancevic- Coach Noble Park United FC

Seniors Final Standings

Noble Park Utd 2 (Z Seci N Vukosavljevic) Monbulk 2 (S Carr D Adams), Old Melburnians 5 (M Pember J Howe 2 J O'Doherty T King BJ Calton) Monash University 7 (A Salmon JE Serrano 2 N Burris 2 R Nation 2), Fitzroy City 1 (BT Light) Nunawading City 1 (SC Bye), Ashburton 1 (B Jackson) Warragul Utd 2 (S Byers M Davies), White Star Dandenong 1 (S Najder) Scotch Old Boys 6 (D Baillie N

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Noble Park Utd	**22**	**16**	**3**	**3**	**86**	**29**	**51**
Nunawading City	22	15	5	2	60	18	50
Monbulk	22	14	5	3	62	22	47
Fitzroy City	22	12	4	6	63	33	40
Scotch Old Boys	22	10	4	8	43	31	34
Monash University	22	10	3	9	52	43	33
Old Melburnians	22	9	5	8	54	41	32
Mooroolbark	22	7	6	9	53	53	27
Warragul Utd	22	6	7	9	26	34	25
Ashburton	22	7	1	14	34	50	22
Rowville Eagles	22	3	1	18	21	103	10
White Star Dandenong	22	0	2	20	14	111	2

The Honours

Champions: Noble Park United
Runner Up: Nunawading City
Relegated: Ashburton, Rowville Eagles, White Star Dandenong

Top Scorers

Coffie K Stemn Jnr	Nunawading City	21
Awal Adem	Nunawading City	19
Zoltan Seci	Noble Park United	18
Quenten Wells	Monbulk	17

Reserves Final Standings

Noble Park Utd 0 Monbulk 1, Old Melburnians 0 Monash University 0, Fitzroy City 6 Nunawading City 1, Ashburton 0 Warragul Utd 0, White Star Dandenong 1 Scotch Old Boys 1, Mooroolbark 7 Rowville Eagle

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Monash University	22	16	3	3	62	19	51
Monbulk	22	12	4	6	41	22	40
Old Melburnians	22	12	4	6	42	27	40
Ashburton	22	11	4	7	33	30	37
Fitzroy City	22	10	6	6	64	45	36
Scotch Old Boys	22	9	8	5	48	28	35
Nunawading City	22	10	5	7	48	35	35
Warragul Utd	22	7	7	8	37	42	28
Mooroolbark	22	7	4	11	36	42	25
Noble Park Utd	22	6	4	12	52	50	22
Rowville Eagles	22	3	3	16	23	94	12
White Star Dandenong	22	1	4	17	15	67	7

PROVI LEAGUE NORTH WEST 3

WATSONIA HEIGHTS

Back Row from Left to right: Anthony Marney, Daniel Bettin, Mark Tavolaro (Coach), Al Popovski, Joe Adamo (Captain), Andrew Seeley, Jeremy Summers, Robert DeMatteo, Daniel Ivanov, Richard (poser) Duerden. Front Row from Left to Right: Omar Ali, Hassan Abullahi, Adrian Tavolaro, Michael Girdler, Paul Sutton, Adam Fiore, Enzo Santone, Martin Laidler.

Watsonia Heights Soccer Club's 2008 season started with the appointment of player- coach, Mark Tavolaro. Mark won the 2007 golden boot from the previous season with 18 goals from 13 matches – helping Watsonia Heights to a fifth place finish.

New recruits: Enzo Santone, Adam Fiore, Maurizio Corzi and Hassan Abullahi were brought into the squad. While the club kept the stalwarts of the 2007 squad: Paul Sutton in goals, big Andy Seeley in charge of the defence with the much improved Danny Ivanov and Captain Joe Adamo controlling the heart of the midfield with his evergreen companions Rob DeMatteo and Jeremy Summers. With Omar Ali and Al Popovski as the rampaging wing backs, there was a great deal of Optimism around the club during pre-season.

The season started well with two solid wins until we met a determined Epping City – Away. The Watsonia boys were unlucky not to come away with a draw after Epping scored in the tenth minute of extra time, securing a 2-1 win.

Watsonia recovered from its first loss by stringing four fine victories in a row. This included a terrific 3-2 win at Brimback after being 2-0 down at half time and thorough thrashings handed out to Mill Park 5-0 (including a Mark Tavolaro hat-trick) and Moreland Wolves 8-3 (including an Enzo Santone hat-trick).

The long journey to Torquay saw the boys drop their third point of the season against Surf Coast Football Club, drawing 0-0. This was followed by 1-1 draw at home against Bundoora United.

The boys bounced back with a hard fought 3-2 win against Ascot Vale and a Richard Duerden hat-trick helped brush aside the Brunswick Zebra's 6-3 at home.

Half way through the season, Watsonia Heights were on top of the table. Mark Tavolaro warned the boys the second half of the season was going to be a lot tougher and he was correct.

The first game of the second half of the season turned into a farce as Dallas Eagles - who were trailing 2-1 at halftime, decided not to play the second half. Four weeks later, the FFV awarded the game to Watsonia Heights as a 3-0 victory, penalising Dallas Eagles for Non-Participation in a scheduled FFV fixture.

The following match against Youth United was postponed until the 16th August due to the pitch being deemed unplayable.

Another loss of 1-0 to Epping City saw Watsonia Heights fall to Third position. A 4-2 win against Northern Untied restored some pride, but all that was washed away with a dismal performance against the lowly Mill Park. Watsonia Heights lost their third game of the season.

The embarrassment of the loss to Mill Park really hurt. Over confidence had played its part and the boy's promised their team-mates they would not drop any more points for the rest of the season – and they didn't.

Convincing wins over Brimbank, Moreland Wolves, Surf Coast, Youth United, Bundoora United, Ascot Vale and finally Brunswick Zebra's saw the title finally awarded to Watsonia Heights.

Seniors Final Standings

Youth Utd 1 (SA Cicek) Dallas Eagles 0, Brunswick Zebras 2 (M Roca 2) Watsonia Heights 2 (S Brown A Popovski), Ascot Vale 3 (E Gonzalez K Salazar AJ Lopez) Northern Utd 0, Bundoora Utd 6 (CN Lomini NS Coyle 2 D Larosa D Guadagno 2) Mill Park 3 (H Al Hassany A Onisiforou 2), Surf Coast 2 (MB Jablonski 2) Brimbank 2 (Z Bogoevski 2), Moreland Wolves 2 (E De Santis) Epping City 1 (N Filin)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Watsonia Heights	22	16	3	3	65	25	51
Epping City	22	15	3	4	48	17	48
Bundoora Utd	22	13	4	5	44	27	43
Brimbank	22	10	6	6	55	36	36
Surf Coast	22	9	6	7	33	36	33
Youth Utd	22	10	2	10	37	43	32
Brunswick Zebras	22	8	6	8	40	39	30
Ascot Vale	22	7	7	8	30	30	28
Mill Park	22	5	6	11	27	49	21
Moreland Wolves	22	4	6	12	36	57	18
Northern Utd	22	4	4	14	21	50	16

The Honours

Champions: Watsonia Heights
Runner Up: Epping City
Relegated: Mill Park, Moreland Wolves, Northern United

Top Scorers

Sacid A Cicek	Youth United	20
Enzo Santone	Watsonia Heights	17
Neil S Coyle	Bundoora United	14
Marcus Jablonski	SurfCoast	14

Youth Utd 4 Dallas Eagles 2, Brunswick Zebras 1 Watsonia Heights 2, Ascot Vale 1 Northern Utd 3, Bundoora Utd 2 Mill Park 2, Surf Coast 1 Brimbank 2, Moreland Wolves 3 Epping City 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Epping City	22	19	2	1	90	16	59
Watsonia Heights	22	16	3	3	63	23	51
Brimbank	22	16	2	4	60	29	50
Youth Utd	22	12	2	8	64	45	38
Brunswick Zebras	22	9	5	8	46	38	32
Surf Coast	22	7	3	12	53	61	24
Ascot Vale	22	7	3	12	35	46	24
Moreland Wolves	22	7	3	12	37	60	24
Bundoora Utd	22	6	5	11	40	52	23
Northern Utd	22	5	6	11	34	63	21
Dallas Eagles	22	5	3	14	35	73	15
Mill Park	22	2	5	15	16	67	11

BEAUMARIS FC

PROVI LEAGUE SOUTH EAST 3

Back Row L-R Wayne Clarke, Binny Shields, Michael Runnals, Ammar Kuljah, Tyler Cudmore-Hall, Travis Chalk-Haton, Daniel Cappilari,Jono Bratt, Erdem Mehmet,
Front: Winston Gregorczyk, Derek Parry, David Gibson, Nick Woodgate, Marcus Antonopoulos, Giacomo D'Imperio.
INSET: Tom Cannon, David Jackson. Not shown, Tom Hogan

Relegated into the 'cellar' last season, Beaumaris have bounced straight back to Prov. 2 marginally ahead of Old Carey, who for the most part were the stand out team in this years competition as they led the league right until the last day.

Beaumaris clinched the league on a drama filled last day as the eventual outcome for the title went right down to the wire, and was settled by goal average. Beaumaris reserve side finished runners-up to Old Carey in the Reserve league.

Coaches Bob Shields and John Papas began this season with a large group of talented youngsters and a few old heads. The aim was for development and most importantly consolidating our place in the league. We developed a training routine and game plan which would be enjoyable and would unite the senior squads. The response from players was outstanding and we had to create a Thirds team to accommodate our complement.

We attracted a couple of players with state league credentials, but basically, our under 16 team of two years earlier filled 70% of the squad. Their initiation into the league was by no means a picnic with every game a tough one, and the quality of some of our opponents was terrific. The immense experience gained by the youngsters will auger well for them in their future.

Right up until the last 6 weeks of the season half the teams in the league were still in in the promotion race, proving how competitive it was. But one by one, Noble Park, Seaford United, Keilor, Dandenong City and Endeavour Hills fell away leaving Bayside Argonauts, Beaumaris and Old Carey to fight it out in an intriguing finale worthy of an Agatha Christie novel.

As fate would have it Old Carey needed only to draw with Bayside to take the title. Bayside with the superior goal difference had to win to get promotion if Beauy lost, and Beauy needed a draw against Endeavour to get promotion. A Beaumaris win and an Old Carey defeat.....now they were long odds!

Congratulations to all the boys at Beaumaris, and to all at the club for their valuable contribution to our success.

Seniors Final Standings

Old Carey 0 Bayside Argonauts 1 (B Whiting), Keilor Wolves 2 (D Panev V Manevski) Noble Park 1 (G Banabakis), Endeavour Hills 0 Beaumaris 2 (D Jackson RA Iles), Eltham North 1 (BW Mulcahy) Seaford Utd 1 (N Allen), Dandenong Warriors 1 (HP Le) Dandenong City 0, Brighton 2 (M McCaig 2) Uni. of Melbourne 3 (M Owen AR Brown HJ Davidson)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Beaumaris	22	15	3	4	53	27	48
Old Carey	22	15	3	4	48	26	48
Bayside Argonauts	22	14	3	5	55	28	45
Seaford Utd	22	10	4	8	36	30	34
Keilor Wolves	22	10	4	8	51	53	34
Dandenong City	22	9	6	7	44	38	33
Endeavour Hills	22	10	1	11	46	55	31
Noble Park	22	8	5	9	41	42	26
Uni. of Melbourne	22	6	3	13	26	38	21
Brighton	22	7	0	15	48	63	21
Dandenong Warriors	22	6	2	14	42	56	20
Eltham North	22	2	6	14	33	67	12

The Honours

Champions: Beaumaris
Runner Up: Old Caery Grammarians
Relegated: N/A

Top Scorers

Dimce Panev	Keilor Wolves	25
Richard Stanner	Old Carey	16
Andrija Buhac	Noble Park	13
Daniel Cappellari	Beaumaris	12
Nicholas Robinson	Endeavour Hills	12

Reserves Final Standings

Old Carey 4 Bayside Argonauts 0, Keilor Wolves 5 Noble Park 0, Endeavour Hills 0 Beaumaris 0, Eltham North 2 Seaford Utd 3, Dandenong Warriors 1 Dandenong City 1, Brighton 0 Uni. of Melbourne 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Old Carey	22	20	0	2	76	21	60
Beaumaris	21	15	3	3	73	30	48
Bayside Argonauts	21	15	2	4	65	32	47
Dandenong Warriors	20	11	3	6	58	33	36
Seaford Utd	22	9	8	5	62	43	35
Brighton	22	8	3	11	39	40	27
Uni. of Melbourne	22	7	4	11	39	49	25
Dandenong City	22	7	4	11	42	57	25
Endeavour Hills	22	7	2	13	35	68	23
Keilor Wolves	22	5	4	13	39	54	19
Eltham North	22	5	0	17	33	78	15
Noble Park	22	3	3	16	37	93	9

ALLEZ LES BLEUS ET BLANCS

By an Englishman in Strasbourg (or a Pom in France if you prefer)

There was a football competition down the road a few weeks ago; it was called something like 'Euro 2008'. A bunch of countries from around the continent sent squads down to the Alps to kick a few balls around in the name of winning a bit of silverware to take back home. Spain won I think, because they seemed jolly happy about it.
Okay, I'm kidding, I was glued to the screen for a fortnight, which I have to confess was something I never expected to find myself doing.
You see I've never really been a huge fan of 'the beautiful game', not in the way that I'm a fan of Rugby, the ugly game if you will. (Due in no small part to being from the English west-country, rugby heartland and home to 'Bath Rugby' who at one time ruled both the English and European leagues.) So, I usually manage to avoid it except during times of national interest such as the European or World Cup finals.
This time however, unlike most other expat Englishmen, I wasn't that fussed about the absence of England in the European Championships, partly because I was certain that my new adopted home nation, France, were sure to put in a good performance following their victory over England during the warm-ups. But that just shows how much I knew about football. With the benefit of hindsight I think we can safely say that if England had qualified for the tournament, they would probably have just embarrassed themselves, even more so than France. Oh la la.
So with England failing to even make it to the party and France being knocked out in the first round, what reason did I have to keep watching? Answer: the sheer spectacle of cracking top-flight international football. Thankfully, unlike the 2006 World Cup, the knock-out rounds were just as exciting as the pool games. Granted not every match was a crowd pleaser, but with upsets galore, usually involving Turkey it seemed, I was kept on the edge my of seat for the duration.
Am I hooked on the round ball game then? Not quite, but I'm certainly taking it more seriously. I now live in a town that is very much a football town: Strasbourg. There is a rugby team here, but they're so insignificant that their stadium doubles as a drainage ditch in wet weather. (The only upside being that they often serve 'vin chaud' to the handful of spectators at half time.) The nearest decent rugby team are Stade Français in Paris, a good 450 km away, so, with the home of 'Le Racing' just a few tram stops from my front door I am now, if by location alone, a Racing Strasbourg supporter.
Who? Okay, unless you avidly follow the French league, you probably haven't even heard of Le Racing Club de Strasbourg (RC Strasbourg). That is not to say they aren't a top flight outfit. Well right now they're not, but I'll explain: Division 2 (L2) is where they currently reside following their relegation from Division 1 (L1) last season; the season before that they were L2 and before that L1 again. Yes, they've been yo-yoing up and down the league like, well, a yoyo. … and so far unbeaten in L2 this season it looks like they're heading back up again next year!
The club was founded in 1906 when the city was part of Germany, indeed they were founded as a 'fussball club'; it was only after the end of the First World War that they chose to change their name to 'Racing Club', one supposes, in order to sound less German. Then during the Second World War, during the annexation of Alsace by Germany, the club existed in two locations: the one in Strasbourg was renamed 'Rasensport club Strassburg' and took part in the German league, while the evacuated Strasbourgeois regrouped in the Dordogne to continue playing in the French league. Needless to say, only one club continued to play after the war, and now, over a hundred years after their initial founding they are still going strong.
The trophy cabinet may not be bulging with silverware, but there have been occasional flashes of brilliance from France's 9th largest city in recent years. The last time the keys to the trophy cabinet were required was in 2005 when they brought home the league cup (and thus qualified for the UEFA cup). Before that it was the French Cup Final in 2001 and before that the league cup once more in 1997. But then you have to start looking way, way back to find any further success worthy of something shiny to take home.
Much of the blame for this inconsistent performance has been laid at the feet of the City council, who have dragged their heels in allowing the club to expand and build a higher capacity stadium. After all, bums on seats equals more cash, more cash equals better players, better players equals better results, better results equals more trophies. So the good news is that a brand new a 45,000 seater stadium (The Eurostadium) is finally entering planning for completion by the 2013-14 season. Lets hope they're still in L1 by then.
So, on reflection, it's not actually a bad club to start following. So follow them I shall.
It just remains for me to practise the terrace chant, which goes 'Allez les bleus et blancs' (go the blue and whites). A chant, one supposes, not entirely dissimilar to 'Allez les bleus' (go the blues) which can be heard echoing across France whenever the national team play. In fact they chant 'Allez les bleus' regardless of whether they are watching football, rugby, tennis, basketball, cycling, athletics; and so too regardless of whether their team or player is winning or losing; it seems to have universal application. Much like 'come on Aussie' one supposes?
In the same spirit 'Allez les bleus et blancs' will have universal application for me. Seeing as I'm only ever likely to be supporting England (the whites), France (The blues), or Le Racing (The blue and Whites).

Visit www.rc-strasbourg.fr for more info.

Bart Hulley blogs at www.englishmaninstrasbourg.com

Racing all over the world: Strasbourg has a new fan in The Bartman.
PHOTO: BART HULLEY

Photo By Bart Hulley

By Bart Hulley

After a period of nearly ten years, the beauty of Facebook has reignited the friendship between myself and Bart Hulley.
Bart and I worked together in the early 90s at The Moving Picture Company in London as production runners. We both lived in the hustle and bustle and the melting pot that is the West End, just around the corner from each other and the MPC studios in Soho – making it very convenient to share a Guinness or two and a Chicken Tikka Masala with a rare neighbour. We were required to work long hours on that job, usually the first ones to arrive and the last ones to leave, doing everything from assisting on shoots, delivery tapes, fetching exotic fruit and cigarettes for pampered actors in edit suites, to answering phones and taking the Managing Director's dog for its daily walk. Never a dull moment, that's for sure.
I left London and MPC in the summer of 1994 to head for America and the World Cup with another runner from MPC, Oliver Loncraine. The Romanians rocked and the Brazilians took out the trophy thanks to a Roberto Baggio spot kick that cleared the bar – apparently, even 'til this day the stewards are still searching for the ball.
Fast forward to 2008 and an email that came out of the *bleu* about two months ago. Bart now lives in France, happily married with two boys. He runs a marketing company, supports Racing and now contributes to GW!

Take it away my long lost pal, Bart...

Ed.

WC QUALIFYING QUESTS

Early Steps On Road To South Africa

It is still two whole years until the kick–off of football's most prestigious tournament, but European qualifying for the 2010 World Cup began this weekend as the lengthy process of determining the world's finest football teams commenced.

As European domestic leagues across the continent had a rest, players set aside club rivalries in an endeavour to help their nations secure glory.

GROUP ONE

Commencing with the results of Group One of the first qualifying round, and Portugal made amends for a disappointing Euro 2008 campaign by demolishing Malta at the Ta'Qali National Stadium.

After leading the first half 1-0 – courtesy of an own-goal - the Portuguese turned it on in a sensational 17-minute second-half spell.

Werder Bremen's Hugo Almeida netted the second and Althetico Madrid's Simao pounced on the rebound to make the score line 3-0.

Chelsea's new star signing Deco set club rivalries aside as he set up national team-mate and Manchester United winger Nani for the fourth, wrapping up a convincing 4-0 drubbing of the European minnows Malta.

Elsewhere in Group One European qualifying, Sweden could only ground out a 0-0 draw against lowly Albania, whilst Hungary and Denmark shared the spoils with the same score line.

GROUP TWO

Group Two produced a few more goals than its preceding group fixtures with 10 goals coming from three matches.

Greece made a commanding start to their World Cup qualifying campaign, as they thumped Luxembourg 3-0, goals coming from Vassilis Torosidis and Fanis Gekas in the first half, before Greek hero Angelos Charisteas put the result beyond doubt with a 77th-minute penalty.

Greece are looking to qualify for their first World Cup since their only appearance in the United States in 1994.

Latvia secured three vital points in their closely contested tussle with Moldova, surviving late pressure to hold on for an important 2-1 away win.

A stoppage-time equaliser handed Israel a point against Euro 2008 co-host Switzerland, as Ottmar Hitzfeld's side surrendered a 2-0 lead.

Clinical set-piece goals from Hakin Yakin and Blaise N'Kufo sent the Swiss on their way, but Israeli captain Yossi Benayoun sparked a revival for the home side as he reduced the deficit on 76 minutes.

In the closing stages, Israeli goalkeeper Dudu Awat sent a hopeful ball into the Swiss half, only to see substitute Moshe Ohayon centre for fellow sub Sahar to poke home and grab a point which had previously looked all but lost.

GROUP THREE

Slovakia was the only team from Group Three to take all three points on the opening day of qualifiers as they defeated Northern Ireland 2-1 in Bratislava on Saturday.

Set-pieces provided the lethal blow to Ireland's hopes, as Liverpool's defender Martin Skrtel and Napoli's Marek Hamsik punished Ireland's slack marking on dead ball situations.

Nigel Worthington's Ireland applied late pressure on the hosts, forcing a Jan Durica own goal which ensured a nervy ending to the match, but the British side were unable to force their way back into the fixture and steal a point.

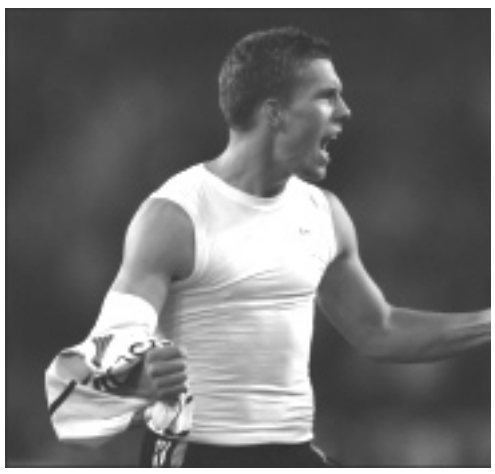
Fellow Group Three contestants Poland and Slovenia played out a 1-1 draw with Poland captain Michal Zewlakow slotting home only his third successful penalty in 81 internationals and Zlatko Dedic replying for Slovenia.

GROUP FOUR

Liechtenstein were taught a footballing lesson in Group Four, where Germany smashed six goals past the European cannon fodder.

A brace from Lukas Podolski and goals from Simon Rolfes, Bastian Schweinsteiger, Thomas Hitzlsperger and Heiko Westermann ensured the Mannschaft would start their 2010 qualifying in a confident fashion.

Teenager Sam Vokes was Wales' hero in the other Group Four match, as his first senior goal for his nation secured a late win in Cardiff's Millennium Stadium against Azerbaijan.



Germany's Lukas Podolski scored twice

GROUP FIVE

Euro 2008 champions Spain continued their terrific form from Europe's top tournament as they secured a comfortable 1-0 win over Bosnia-Herzegovina in Group five action.

Spanish starlet David Villa missed a penalty for the home side, but made amends as he scored the only goal of the match to seal victory.

Belgium and Estonia played out a five-goal thriller in Liege, with Belgian veteran Wesley Sonck scoring the winner ten minutes from time.

Despite a valiant effort from battling Estonia, Belgium were off to a winning start thanks to Sonck's decisive late finish which separated the two sides.

Euro 2008 semi-finalists Turkey saw off Armenia 2-0 away from home, with strikes from Middlesborough's Tuncay Sanli and and Fenerbahce hero Semih Senturk.

GROUP SIX

After winning their first qualifying match 3-0 against Andorra, Kazakhstan were thumped by the same score line against Croatia in Group Six.

Croatia went top of the group on goal difference, and England moved to second spot, after a Joe Cole double secured victory over Andorra.

After failing to qualify for Euro 2008, England's current manager Fabio Capello is under intense pressure to produce the goods in the 2010 World Cup stakes.

Ukraine's golden boy and Chelsea drop-out Andriy Shevchencko came off the bench to rescue Ukraine, converting a penalty deep into stoppage time, handing his country maximum points against their European neighbours Belarus in the other Group Six fixture.

GROUP SEVEN

Injury-hit Romania suffered a shock 3-0 loss to Lithuania, as the home side was completely outclassed, with regulars Adrian Mutu, Christian Chivu, Razvan Rat and Banel Nicolita missing from the starting line-up.

Group Seven produced another shock, as France lost 3-1 to Euro 2008 co-hosts Austria.

Both Austria and France had tournaments to forget earlier this year, but Les Blues misery was further compounded as Karl Bruckner's side played on the counter-attack with sensational results.

Serbia defeated the Faroe Islands 2-0 in the other Group Seven fixture.

GROUP EIGHT

World Cup holder Italy left it late against lowly Cyprus, as a last-gasp Antonio Di Natale strike broke Cyprus hearts.

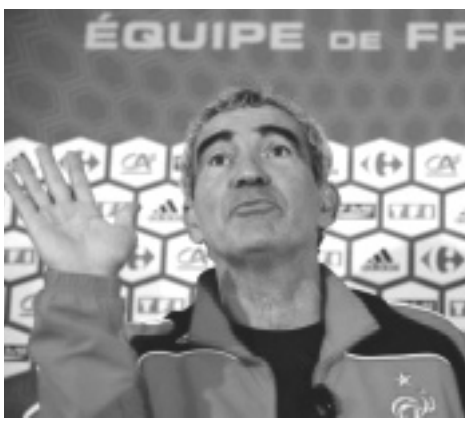
The Udinese striker opened the scoring with an early goal, and left it late to score his second to hand Italy all three points.

New Manchester United striker Dimitar Berbatov failed to help his side Montenegro to victory in their first competitive international since separation from Serbia, as a stoppage-time equaliser from Blagoy Georgiev gave Bulgaria a point in the 2-2 draw.

Former Italy manager Giovanni Trapattoni made a winning start in charge of the Republic of Irlenad as Glenn Whelan's strike gave them a 2-1 away victory over Georgia.

GROUP NINE

Scotland failed to add more British success on the first weekend of World Cup qualifiers as fell to Macedonia 1-0, while Norway and Iceland shared the spoils in an entertaining 2-2 draw in Oslo, to round out the qualifiers on the European continent.



Pressure will once again mount on Raymond Domenech

By Julius Ross

Photos by Soccer Way

WEEKEND RESULTS

Albania 0-0 (HT 0-0) Sweden

Andorra 0-2 (HT 0-0) England
J Cole 49
J Cole 55

Armenia 0-2 (HT 0-0) Turkey
Sanli 61
Senturk 77

Austria 3-1 (HT 2-0) France
Janko 9
Aufhauser 42
Ivanschitz (pen) 73
Govou 61

Belgium 3-2 (HT 1-0) Estonia
Sonck 39
Defour 75
Sonck 79
Zeniov 57
Oper 90

Croatia 3-0 (HT 2-0) Kazakhstan
Kovac 13
Modric 35
Petric 79

Cyprus 1-2 (HT 1-1) Italy
Aloneftis 28
Di Natale 8
Di Natale 90+2

FYR Macedonia 1-0 (HT 1-0) Scotland
Naumoski 5

Georgia 1-2 (HT 0-1) Rep of Ireland
Kenia 90+2
Doyle 13
Whelan 70

Hungary 0-0 (HT 0-0) Denmark

Israel 2-2 (HT 0-1) Switzerland
Benayoun 73
Sahar 90
Yakin 45
Nkufo 56

Liechtenstein 0-6 (HT 0-1) Germany
Podolski 21
Podolski 48
Rolfes 65
Schweinsteiger 66
Hitzlsperger 76
Westermann 87

Luxembourg 0-3 (HT 0-2) Greece
Torosidis 37
Gekas 45
Charisteas (pen) 77

Malta 0-4 (HT 0-1) Portugal
Said o.g. 24
Hugo Almeida 61
Simao 71
Nani 78

Moldova 1-2 (HT 0-2) Latvia
Alexeev 76
Karlsons 8
Astafjevs 22

Montenegro 2-2 (HT 0-1) Bulgaria
Vucinic 62
Jovetic (pen) 82
Petrov 11
Georgiev 90

Norway 2-2 (HT 1-1) Iceland
Iversen (pen) 36
Iversen 50
Helguson 39
Gudjohnsen 68

Poland 1-1 (HT 1-1) Slovenia
Zewlakow (pen) 17
Dedic 35

Romania 0-3 (HT 0-1) Lithuania
Stankevicius 31
Mikoliunas 69
Kalonas 87

Serbia 2-0 (HT 1-0) Faroe Islands

Slovakia 2-1 (HT 0-0) Northern Ireland
Skrtel 46
Hamsik 70
Durica o.g. 81

Spain 1-0 (HT 0-0) Bosnia-Herzegovina
Villa 58

Ukraine 1-0 (HT 0-0) Belarus
Shevchenko (pen) 90+3

Wales 1-0 (HT 0-0) Azerbaijan
Vokes 83

Netherlands 1-2 (HT 1-1) Australia

Gas bagging, News & Views

BOO'S WORLD

With Mark Boric

The death of actor Michael Pate during the week prompted a search through a collection of old Soccer Action newspapers for articles on his connection with the local game. It was on July 7, 1976 that he graced the cover, to promote the Referees v Press game which he was to be a linesman in.

Pate began his career in theatre and movies in Sydney, where he was born in Drummoyne in 1920. For much of the 1960's he workrd in America as the television industry was taking off, appearing as a character actor in shows like Gunsmoke, The Rifleman, Batman, Mission: Impossible, The Man from U.N.C.L.E., Get Smart and Rawhide. Upon his return to Australia he won two Logie Awards for his television work, his role in Matlock Police gaining him most fame. He would go on to appear in the ABC mini-series Power Without Glory.

So in 1976 he was first approached by Soccer Action to play for the press team, having played for Gladesville-Ryde in Sydney competitions forty years earlier. A television commercial shoot scheduled for the morning after the game saw him not risk injury and opt to run the line instead, which he did so wearing a Carlton VFL jumper.

The press team that evening at Olympic Park was coached by Knut Werner, who's Goal! Weekly equivalent would probably be Tsigan Forever. Laurie Schwab (Soccer Action and The Age) featured, as did future VSF Chairman Henry Siwka who was then with GTV9. Leading coach Tony Vrzina got a run, qualifying through his work with the Hrvatski List. Long standing Greek media men Ilias Dounoudis (Neos Kosmos) and Emmanuel Milios (Athletic Echo) were also involved.

With the referees playing, Pate was joined as a match official by Bob Randall and VSF Secretary George Wallace, who was the referee. Jim Dale, who before becoming a referee had twice won the Third Division Best and Fairest Award when playing for Heidelberg City. The Class One referees to play in the game included Jim Brennan, Jim Dixon, Joe Slaats and Colin Tuffield. The match finished a 1-1 draw.

The game was a curtain-raiser to the Victorian state team taking on the Italian Army. Yes, the Italian Army took a break from trying to get their tanks out of reverse gear to travel and play some football. Five and a half thousand people turned up on a Wednesday night to see them defeat Victoria 2-1. These were not run-of-the-mill soldiers. Goalkeeper Franco Tancredi played for AC Milan. Vincenzo D'Amico (Lazio), Patrizio Sala (Torino), Roberto Pruzzo (Genoa) and Graziano Bini (Inter) were all highly regarded Serie A stars. Most notably Bruno Conti of Roma went on to play a major role in Italy's 1982 World Cup Final triumph.

The late Tony Boggi was ill at the time and unable to coach the Victorian team which left Bobby McLachlan to take the reigns. Essendon Lions pair Jim O'Reilly and John Gardiner in the midfield were Victoria's stars on the day. Mike Pye and Arthur Xanthopoulos were vital at the back. Victoria's goal came from a twenty-two yard free-kick by Branko Buljevic.

The tourists, brought out by current SBS personality and then NSWSF Vice President Tony Palumbo, were undefeated on their travels. The Socceroos had been beaten 3-1, Wollongong City 6-3 and Adelaide City Juventus 4-1. Thier manager Catello Tronco said all the right things afterwards, telling Soccer Action "We were very suprised. Victoria is a good team. THEY WERE PROBABLY AS GOOD AS AUSTRALIA".

The Matlock Police squad featuring Michael Pate (holding starting gun) and Paul Cronin (right), get ready to tackle a Philips Soccer League crowd during the late 70s

KATSA'S KORNER

With George Katsamboukas

KATSA'S KORNER 7-26

FINAL ROUNDS. DING! DING!

The final rounds of the State and Provisional Leagues have been played, with a number of teams securing Happy Ends for 2008, whilst many more teams….

Prepare for the long trek to the Westgate, where on the way they will think about what went wrong in 2008, before reaching the top of this tall Melbourne Landmark, and then turning the steering wheel sharp left.

Club Powerbrokers can now pack away their Strips, boxes of Dencorub, strapping tape, team sheet books, and recharge the batteries to do it all over again in 2009, where….

They will begin to fund raise to pay for the Clubs 2009 expenses, top of the list being the many $$$ that they will direct towards the House Of Darebin, who in return will continue to provide the excellent service and clear direction required for Soccer in Victoria to progress.

Did I write that?
Sorry punters, I think that I have had one J Walker too many.
Bottle that is!

GONG SHOW

Over to the House of Darebin we shall remain, where once again, they have excelled themselves, and shown about as much respect to the Life Members of the FFV as an inmate in Barwon Prison would show his Prison Guard who locks him up each night.

Life Membership to the FFV has many benefits, the biggest being that as a Life Member, Mark and Co will send you an invitation to attend the FFV Awards night, and along with that invitation, you will also receive an Invoice.

That's right folks, as a Life Member you have to pay for the privilege of attending the FFV's Awards Night.

But wait, there's more.

Perhaps you have been fortunate enough to have an Award actually named after you, in your Honour, as recognition for the many years of effort that you have put in for the great game of Soccer.

The FFV as recognition of your achievement will also send you an Invoice for your ticket to attend so as you can present the Award named in your Honour.

Let's convert this to AFL Terms, if Chas Brownlow was still alive he would be charged to attend the Brownlow Award Night where he would present the Medal named after him to the Winner.

However, if you are a Zone Representative, you will receive a Complimentary ticket to the FFV Awards Night.

ZONE OUT

Zone Representatives form part of the new Master Plan for the FFV, where existing Clubs and Club Powerbrokers, who have contributed many years of service to the Game, and whose shoes have collected about 25 Tonnes of Mud along the way, over the years, have been cast aside.

Don't get me wrong here, there are some Zone Representatives who have been around the Game for a very long time, and they also have collected many tonnes of mud on their shoes along the way.

The new era of Victorian Soccer of Tie and Suits parading around the various grounds, in the hope of new Clubs popping up to represent various regions in a new Fantasy League, which without funding from existing, unwanted, ethnically tied Clubs, has about as much chance of going ahead, as I have of having a night out with Kylie Mynogue.

Interesting stuff and I caught up with Neilson Love this weekend who has delivered his Life Membership back to the FFV along with his resignation, straight to the House of Darebin.

I'm told that Betty Hoar has also followed suit, as she also was invoiced to attend the FFV Awards Night to present the Medal named after her, to the VPL Women's Best and Fairest.

Mark and Co, tell us that this is not so, tell us that I have all of this wrong!

FOR FLAG'S SAKE

Palace Cinemas, if you are looking for Ushers to manage the seating of patrons in your theatres, look no further.

For the Assistant Men in Black have plenty of experience and training with this role as they do it each weekend.

A new trend has emerged with Linesman keeping a very sharp eye on Team Benches to ensure that all the punters are seated correctly.

Flagging for Offside's is not important as long as the correct number of people are on each bench, and that they are all seated, with the exception of the Coach.

Seek.com.au will get an absolute battering this week, as many Club Powerbrokers have been waiting for season's end before they show their current Coach the door.

If you are one of these unfortunate Coaches who will be without gainful employment, fear not, as there is a Club Powerbroker waiting to speak to you!

Short but not so sweet this week.
This is Katsa – Just as you've known him.

TSIGAN'S TSIGAR

WHO DO GURU'S?

And then there were three.

The Knights and Heil de Bergers are gunning to fight out the do or die rubber next week, while The Magic spin the Wheel of Fortune for a fortnight before they play in granny's backyard.

Finals football has not been kind to Gully, who was bumped off for the third year in a row. At least they had the "minor premiership" belt to place on the mantle, although they would be the first to concede that in this altered state, it's about as important as the Intercontinental Heavyweight Title.

The Preston Lions made a late dash for cash, but were left without credit and macht Richmond Eagles flew high enough to impress, but were as effective as the Herman Goering's Luftwaffe.

You all know that I'm about as politically correct as Pol 'Smoking' Pot, and Mao 'The Dung' ZeDong. Finals Fever in Australia razes political correctness aside, as the Preliminary Final will show. The FFV will have a field day ripping out fines to the respective Clubs, who dare to show their true Nationalistic colors in red white and blue, and yellow and black.

So, my advice as the undisputed Dictator of Tsigantopia, and President and Founder of Tsigan United FC, is that the Knights and Berger fans bring Western Bulldogs and Richmond Tigers flags and other AFL endorsed paraphernalia to the game. And why snot? After all, it's just a flipping game and the AFL is really the VFL in disguise.

We are Victorians ya know, digger.

WOOD SHAVINGS

Gough Whitlam, Whittlesea Zebras, Japeth Goat and a myriad of the Mid West have all this in common.

Gough was kicked out of office because of some shifties in Parliament. Whittlesea were relegated because of FFV bungling. Japeth Goat had a spell put him 37 years ago and could only sing when he wanted to talk, whilst the Mid West carnies basically sit on their porch with a shotgun and a mini scythe, and strip a piece of wood into an obtuse icon while whistling Dixie.

I would like to know therefore, if the haka loogies are that bent out of shape that the FFV are ripping the soul out of the domestic league, why don't they really do something anarchic about it?

Holding talks, and brokering deals are going to achieve Nada, and although she is a decent looking Slavic chick, she has about as much pull as an armless bloke trying to jimmy his shimmy.

Finances have been the bane of civilization ever since a shekel and dinarius became a bargaining tool. The Barter was THE most effective stock of trade, but since the wogs and other gippo's didn't know what to do with the silver mines, the spawning of Johnny Cash became a more than likely result of digging in the dirt for the Kings of Queens on the throne.

Money makes the world go around, and it must be funny in a rich mans world.

I stand alone in the cry of fowl, robot chicken or not, that if clubs, parents, fans and spectators are disenchanted with the current trend of cash and grab tactics by the hierarchy, nothing less than a revolution will change the outlook of the game, and that, for its betterment.

Every Revolution has its pro's and con's, and if Con was dealing with a pro, then again, the cash would determine whether or not he would achieve some satisfaction, with The Rolling Stones blaring out of the speakers. If a Con could barter a pro, than lemons, lambs and spit roasts would be the order of the day, but, the family gatherings would leave more than a bad taste in someone's mouth. I mean, a pro is welcome at a family BBQ, as much as a Polar Bear is welcome at a Penguin Parade.

STRIKE ERRS

Last week, I endeavored to placate your palate with a biased opinion as to why football is a delight to watch. The Goalkeepers of yore, were exposed and presented in full boogies minus the Speedo's, and hopefully, you, dear reader, were enriched.

In rich vein, and with a serving of ghoul ash in between courses, I present to you the reason why people pay to watch blokes run around after a piece of synthetic pig skin.

It's all about the goals.

Sure we love to watch a ball thundered off a boot, and equally matched, nay, thwarted by a spectacular show of miserly emasculation. But, nothing gets the blood flowing through the system like when you see the ball stopped by a ripple of the onion bags, and the score is one to the good.

Stefan Dembicki of RC Lens plundered 16 goals against Auvi Asturies in the French Cup in December 1942. **Panagiotis Pontikos** scored 16 in a game last May as his side Olympos Xylofaglou thrashed Agios Athanasios 24-3 in the Cypriot Third Division.

Scotsman **John Petrie** scored 13 goals, a 'British' record, in Arbroath's 36-0 win over Bon Accord in 1885 in a Scottish Cup match. The result is still a record in 'British' football.

Luton Town's **Joe Payne** scored 10 against Bristol Rovers in 1936, earning him the predictable nickname Ten Goal Payne. (I personally would've said Major, but meh)… There is a plaque dedicated to him in his home town of Chesterfield. **Vincent Caccodi** smokes Chesterfield's.
He's an eggplant.
You're a cantaloupe.

Australian centre forward **David Zdrilic** struck 8 times as the Socceroos team destroyed 'American' Samoa 31-0 in 2001.

Alfonso Alves caned 7, to break a Dutch league record in Heerenveen's 9-0 hammering of Heracles Almelo. (What have the Dutch to do with Greek Mythological heroes? Ajax, now Hercules? What's going on?)

Smashing Sixes. **Ivan Kelic** and **Pat Brodnik** achieved that feat in the 1991/992 NSL season. **Younis Mahmoud** did likewise in an 8-0 victory for Al-Khor in the Qatar league.
Who?
Exactly.

Michael Chunys smacked 5 in 60 minutes last week in the SA Flinders League. Also has a great line and length delivery that would make Glen McGrath dance in delirium. **Oleg Salenko** achieved the same feat, but in a World Cup match when Russia beat Cameroon 6-1 in 1994.

Marco Van Basten, Ruud van Nistelrooy, Simone Inzaghi and Dado Prso have scored 4 times in a UEFA Champions League match. In September 2006, **Lukas Podolski**, the Teutonic Terror, became the only the second German to score 4 in a European Championship game – equaling **Gerd Muller's** haul against Albania in 1967.

Real Madrid legend **Alfredo Di Stefano** scored a hat-trick in the 1960European Cup Final, but his teammate **Ferenc Puskas** outdid him with four crackers. The final score was Real Madrid 7, Eintracht Frankfurt 3. In front of 120,000 Scotsmen and bonny lasses, what else could one ask for?

What makes a great striker?
Soooooooooot vreeeeeee!
Kick da bludee thing!

Midfielders can run all day, pass all day, yap, snap and trap.
Defenders hack, back track and can't be slack otherwise they are off after two sad tackles.
A centre forward has to bang 'em in, and quite consistently at prompt per se. Not to pick nits, but alas, the only way to win is to score.

Dur said Fred, who was too sexy for his shirt, because he is a model and does his little turn on the cat walk. Yeah, shaking his little toosh on the cat walk.
Barney was my personal choice though. That laugh was priceless. Almost as good as Krusty's and not as girlish as Mozart's.

What that has to do with football I'll never know, nor would I condescend to lower you to my level with explanations which mystify and leave perplex ion to the Crusaders who thought it was a grand idea to walk 10 miles in full metal armour through the desert in broad daylight to face Saladin.

I still have a lovely bunch of coconuts, but I'm putting them on e-bay this week.
They still work and are in great nick.

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CAMPBELLTOWN COMEBACK ENDS RAIDERS' RUN

In the Devine Homes Final 5 Semi Final at Newton Village Sport Complex a second Jason Trimboli goal in extra time was enough to give the Red Devils a 3-2 victory over Raiders and a birth in the Preliminary Final next week.

The Red Devils looked all but gone with only fifteen minutes to go in the match at two goals down but staged a courageous comeback to keep their grand final hopes alive. Despite Raiders having the upper hand for most of the match, their missed chances early on would cost them dearly. Raiders were on fire in the first fifteen minutes, chances by Aaron Westervelt, Richie Alagich and Mimi Saric all unfortunately missing their target.

On the half hour mark, after shrugging off a tackle by Campbelltown's Paul Savio Westervelt was finally able to put away a ball skimming under the diving keeper Edward Scalzi for Raiders first. The goal seemed to wake the Red Devils into action, who were finding it difficult to penetrate the Raiders defence despite the absence of suspended seasoned defender Daniel Menechella.

Trimboli had a chance to equalize late in the first half, getting a head onto a free kick taken 30 metres out, only to be denied by a great reflex save from Raiders keeper Robert Matosevic. Raiders began the second half with the same intensity, but again were missing opportunities to score. One of the most entertaining battles on the pitch was between the two speedsters of both teams, Raiders Aaron Taye on Campbelltown's Domenic Signoriello matching it run for run and tackle for tackle. In the 68th minute, Taye broke free with a brilliant run down the right flank to cross a ball in to Saric on the left just outside the box, who headed it away for Raiders second.

With only fifteen minutes to go in the match, the Red Devils looked destined for defeat, missing chances that came their way. Then, in what was a six minute period of tide turning attacking football, the Red Devils staged a remarkable comeback. Catanzaro put his side in the mix with one of his signature goals in the 77th minute. The Red Devils then came tantalizing close to scoring another minutes later, when a through ball by Stanko Zilic missed the head of Andy Fowler directly in front of goal, but fell at the feet of Trimboli who blasted it wide of Matosevic. The flurry of late game action culminated in a goal six minutes later by Trimboli, after receiving a ball around the penalty spot, drilling it past Matosevic.

Campbelltown were now playing on momentum, their comeback bringing newfound confidence to the side as the game was forced to extra time. Having given their all for the first 90 minutes and using all three substitutions, Raiders were now looking like not much was left in the tank as they started the 1st period of extra time.

MetroStars flying Gazelle James Yong on his way to scoring the equalizer against Adelaide City in Semi Final of Devine Homes Final 5

Drama at the 100th minute mark, as referee Quefflec was struck down with cramping and assistant referee De Martino took up the spot in the middle and official Nelson Galdamez, who was at the game spectating now the new assistant official taking his place.

After the six minute disruption in play, both sides were able to refocus on the job at hand, Devils coach Rocky Aloisi and Raiders Asst Coach Ivan Zafran looking to find that extra something to lift their chargers to a victory.

Campbelltown began the second period of extra time with a blast, finding the back of the net within the first minute with what was to be the match winner. A high ball in from the centre circle, bounced favourably for midfielder Nathan Fleetwood who chipped in a beautifully placed ball across the face of goal for Trimboli to head in.

Although Raiders fought valiantly, they had run out of legs, their retiring Captain Scott Morrison only adding to their woes when he ended his football career with a red card after a ruthless tackle just outside the box. Campbelltown's win secured them a spot in the Preliminary Final next week against big guns Adelaide City.

At Adelaide City Park, a last gasp 92nd minute goal by Louis Brain gave MetroStars a 2-1 victory over Adelaide City, handing them direct passage to the 2008 Devine Homes Final 5 Grand Final. The two big guns of the Super League played out a highly entertaining match where chances to score were there for both teams. Adelaide City were without the services of player/coach Damian Mori, still rehabilitating from a dislocated shoulder sustained in the FFSA CUP Final a fortnight ago but had a capable strike force of Fred Agius and Johnathon Negus upfront in his place. The Black and Whites should've taken an early lead in the match, when a Kristian Rees perfectly directed ball forward found striker Jonathon Negus who only had MetroStars keeper Daniel Godley to beat, but was unable to hit the mark. David Palladino and Nick Budin were giving plenty of supply up front for the two strikers but it was a case of nothing going in for them until Agius slotted one in to take City into the lead in the second half. MetroStars flying gazelle James Yong soon equalised to keep his side's chances alive. With injury time being played, all signs were heading for a spell of extra time, until the MetroStars midfield opened up, created some space on the park and put in a great ball for Brain who finished off for the match winner and a place in the Grand Final.

Adelaide City and Campbelltown City will now face up to each other in the Preliminary Final next week for their right to book a grand final spot.

By Nat Adamopoulos

Photo by George Manos

FFSA RESULTS

DEVINE HOMES SUPER LEAGUE FINAL 5 SERIES

Adelaide City 1 (F.Agius)
MetroStars 2 (J.Yong, L.Brain)
(HT 0-0)
Best – Adel City (F.Agius, P.Pezos, J.Cummins) MetroStars (J.Yong, L.Brian, I.Karlovic)

Campbelltown City 3 (J.Trimboli 2, S.Catanzaro) Raiders 2 (M.Saric, A.Westervelt)
(HT 0-1) (FT 2-2) (AET 3-2)
Best – Campbelltown (S.Catanzaro, N.Fleetwood, J.Trimboli)
Raiders (Not Provided)

TOP 5 CHALLENGE – PREMIER LEAGUE
Adelaide Hills 5 (N.Elliot 2, D.Paice, J.Gomez, C.Bowman) Western Strikers 5 (J.Grgic, C.McNichol, S.McNeil, A.Boulabek, D.Vinci)
(HT 1-3) (FT 4-4) (AET 5-5)
Adelaide Hills won 4-3 on penalties

Adelaide Comets 0
Adelaide Cobras 1 (T.O.G.) (HT 0-1)

FOOTBALL WEST STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Sorrento	20	13	4	3	55	30	25	43
Perth	20	12	4	4	45	30	15	40
Floreat Athena	20	12	3	5	41	25	16	39
Inglewood Utd	20	10	4	6	36	31	5	34
Mandurah City	20	9	6	5	54	36	18	33
Stirling Lions	20	8	5	7	39	28	11	29
Cockburn City	20	7	4	9	39	49	-10	25
Swan I.C.	20	7	3	10	38	45	-7	24
Western Knights	20	7	3	10	34	45	-11	24
ECU Joondalup	20	6	3	11	42	44	-2	21
Armadale SC	20	5	4	11	27	51	-24	19
Fremantle SC	20	0	5	15	23	59	-36	5

RESULTS - Round 20

Fremantle Spirit 4(Mukmirovic12'36'Mellan42'58')
Armadale 5(Oishi2'87'Robinson25'Pomfrit50'P OG2')
Mandurah City 2(Attrill46'O'Callaghan63') Inglewood United 1(Summit86')
Swan IC 0 Stirling Lions 2(Rhodes59'Rosindale90')
Western Knights 3(OG18'Micevski67'Trim82') Floreat Athena 2(Scott12'84')
ECU Joondalup 2(McMurray44'Collins61')
Sorrento FC 3(Harnwell45'55'McDonald47')
Perth SC 4(Campbell29'OG50'Onoforo63'Jukic77') Cockburn City 1(DeAbreu44')

WOLLONGONG TAKE THE TITLE IN GRITTY BATTLE

Wollongong FC, formerly the Wollongong Wolves, defeated the Sutherland Shire Sharks 4-2 in the NSW Premier League grand final, played at Penrith on Sunday.

Once again, Sutherland coach Brian Brown gambled by including his injured captain George Souris, at the heart of the defence. For Wollongong, star striker Osagie Ederaro was not fit in time, but wide midfielder Matthew Bailey, an injury worry after the major semi-final victory, made the cut.

Sutherland started the game well, pushing Wollongong back into their own half, and scored a good goal after only seven minutes. Brendan Gan, one of the revelations of the season, surged through the middle and sent in a thumping shot which Justin Pasfield in the Wollongong goal couldn't hold; Nick Stavroulakis was on hand to thump in the rebound.

Brown's men might have had a second on 24 minutes when Gan was played in by Bran Boardman, following good work in midfield by David Reid. The young midfielder, now bound for Sydney FC, sent his shot just wide.

So far most of the running had come from the premiers, but Wollongong unexpectedly came back into the game with a goal just after half an hour. Michael Hawrysiuk took a long throw from the left, it was flicked on by Balla Conde in the middle, and Matthew Bailey was able to flick a looping header past Phil Zabaks, who had inched off his line.

The goal energized Wollongong, who went ahead on 38 minutes with a tremendous goal. Awarded a free kick from 25 yards out, on the left-hand side, Wollongong put both Hawrysiuk and Tynan Diaz over the ball. The former dummied, and Diaz sent a magnificent free kick into the far corner of the goal. A strike truly worthy of a grand final.

Sutherland nearly scored a stunning free kick goal of their own through Jim Bakis, but his effort on 42 minutes flew over the bar, and Wollongong went into the sheds with a 2-1 advantage that rather belied the run of play.

Sutherland went on the attack in the second half, but were leaving themselves vulnerable on the breakaway, and it was to cost them. On 58 minutes, Wollongong's experienced marksman Ilija Preznoski was put through on the right; George Souris came across to challenge him, but Preznoski perceptively nudged the ball past the unfit Sutherland captain and set off: in came the challenge, down went the Wollongong man. Penalty.

Chris Price duly tucked it home, and Wollongong were 3-1 ahead.

Matters remained that way for a long time, with John Turner's side sticking all but Preznoski and Mitchell Long behind the ball, and defending stoutly. Sutherland brought on Matthew Hall, to add some more pace and impetus to their attack, but the move looked a forlorn one.

Brad Boardman, so prolific for Sutherland this season, finally got his head to a cross on 64 minutes, but his effort flew wide of the far post. The substitute Hall did create a chance for himself nine minutes later, when he latches onto a long ball and slipped past the advancing Pasfield: the angle for the shot was too acute, however, and he could only find the side netting.

Wollongong's defensive play became more physical, with several players receiving yellow cards as the minutes ticked away. They were still proving hard to breach, however, and Sutherland were unable to create another clear chance until the first minute of injury time, when Boardman again went close with a header, this time courtesy of a cross from Hall.

The substitute was involved again a minute later, when Phil Jablonski – thrown up front by Brian Brown in the final minutes – looped the ball in from the right. Hall met the cross with a ferocious volley at the far post, but Pasfield was out to smother.

In the third minute of injury time, Sutherland finally broke through. Jablonski again made space for himself on the right, but this time shot straight at goal, and managed to bisect the small gap between Pasfield and the far corner. A splendid parting shot for the premiers.

But it was Wollongong's game. As the men in light blue massed around the Wollongong are, the ball broke forward: Preznoski flicked a header on, and substitute Samat Kaynak was clear through the defence, with ample time to slide his shot beyond Zabaks for Wollongong's fourth.

It may not have been stylish, but Wollongong have deserved the title with their consistency throughout the season, and their resilience during the finals series. Congratulations to the champions!

TeleChoice The People's Choice

FOOTBALL NSW

TELECHOICE RESULTS

SUPER LEAGUE: MINOR SEMI FINALS: FIRST GRADE: FC Bossy Liverpool Rockdale City Suns Washed Out. GRADE 20: Central Coast Lightning PCYC Parramatta Eagles Washed Out. MAJOR SEMI FINALS: FIRST GRADE: Bonnyrigg White Eagles PCYC Parramatta Eagles Washed Out. GRADE 20: Northern Tigers Rockdale City Suns Washed Out.

DIVISION ONE: MINOR SEMI FINALS: FIRST GRADE: Dulwich Hill SC Stanmore Hawks Washed Out. GRADE 20: Blacktown Spartans Schofield Scorpions Washed Out. MAJOR SEMI FINALS: FIRST GRADE: Spirit FC Inter Lions Washed Out. GRADE 20: Spirit FC Inter Lions Washed Out.

SUPER YOUTH LEAGUE: MAJOR SEMI FINALS: GRADE 13: Central Coast Lightning 2 PCYC Parramatta Eagles 1. GRADE 14: Bonnyrigg White Eagles 2 Western NSW Panthers 5 Win by penalties (0-0 F/T 0-0 E/T). GRADE 15: Western NSW Panthers 1 Southern NSW FC 3 Win by penalties (1-1 F/T 2-2 E/T). GRADE 16: PCYC Parramatta Eagles Northern Tigers Washed Out. GRADE 18: Central Coast Lightning 2 Northern Tigers 0. MINOR SEMI FINALS: GRADE 13: Granville Rage Sydney Wanderers Washed Out. GRADE 14: Dulwich Hill SC Schofield Scorpions Washed Out. GRADE 15: Bonnyrigg White Eagles Northern Tigers Washed Out. GRADE 16: Granville Rage Spirit FC Washed Out. GRADE 18: Western NSW Panthers 0 PCYC Parramatta Eagles 2 Extra Time (0-0 F/T).

By Mike Salter

Photo by FFNSW

SHFC: PICK OF THE APPLE ISLE

South Hobart took out the Tasmanian State premiership when they beat Northern Tasmanian champions Devonport City 3-0 at KGV Park on Saturday.

South Hobart, the Southern Tasmanian league champions, had also overcome Devonport 2-0 the previous weekend in the Milan Lakoseljac Memorial Trophy State-wide final.

South finished the season with five of the six trophies on offer this year, a triumph for this 98-year-old club, their players and supporters, and their coach, Ken Morton, who was in his first year at the helm.

Devonport offered much more resistance than the previous weekend, but again it was not enough to thwart the southerners.

New signing from England and Oldham Athletic, 24-year-old striker Daniel White, had a marvellous debut for South Hobart, scoring twice and making the other goal.

He scored their opener in the 10th minute with his first touch of a football in Australia in a competitive match, then made the second for Billy Gasparinatos. He scored his second and South's third in the 4th minute of stoppage time.

Devonport applied early pressure and Sean Howe went close on a couple of occasions, while Paul Scicluna was a constant threat to the South rearguard.

In the 10th minute, David Abbott crossed low from the left and Gasparinatos missed the ball, which carried through to the unmarked White, who fired into an empty net with his first touch of the game.

Scicluna had a shot from point-blank range blocked by South keeper Sam Kruijver in the 57th minute after Hugh Ludford's header back to his keeper was too soft.

In the 72nd minute, White was confronted by John Compagne wide on the right, but the Englishman made the angle and curled a low ball into the goalmouth for Gasparinatos to score.

Four minutes into stoppage time, Jonathon Ladic fed White down the inside-right channel and the striker fired a quick shot past keeper Andrew Howe to make it 3-0.

Kingborough Lions United moved up to seventh spot in the league by beating University 2-1 away at Olinda Grove last Sunday and condemned New Town Eagles to eighth place and a promotion/relegation play-off against Division One champions Hobart United.

Greg Freeman and Marcello Marchioli netted for Kingborough, while Takayuki Manaka replied for University.

University goalkeeper Ryo Matsuo saved a penalty from Brett Andrews, while Freeman had an effort ruled out for off-side.

In the first leg of the promotion/relegation play-off at KGV Park on Friday night, New Town Eagles walloped Hobart United 5-1 to almost certainly ensure their Premier League survival.

Record Breakers: South Hobart adds the Tasmanian Premiership to its astonishing haul of trophies this season

Adam McKeown fired Eagles ahead in the 7th minute, but a penalty converted by Jacob Kuel in the 11th minute made it 1-1.

Damien O'Brian restored Eagles lead in the 29th minute, while McKeown added his second and Eagles' third in the 33rd minute.

Defender Chris Wass's header from a corner made it 4-1 at the interval, while substitute Adam Shackcloth completed the scoring five minutes from the end.

Nelson Eastern Suburbs won the women's State premiership with a 5-1 victory over Launceston City at KGV Park on Saturday.

Amelia Jones put the southerners ahead in the 6th minute, but Chelsea Smith equalised in the 21st minute to make it 1-1 at the break.

Nelson powered home in the second half with four goals without reply. Bliss Cantrell netted twice and Sarah Morris once, while the remaining goal was an own-goal.

FOOTBALL FEDERATION TASMANIA

By Walter Pless

Photos by Walter Pless

Season Preview

THE WORD IN GREECE

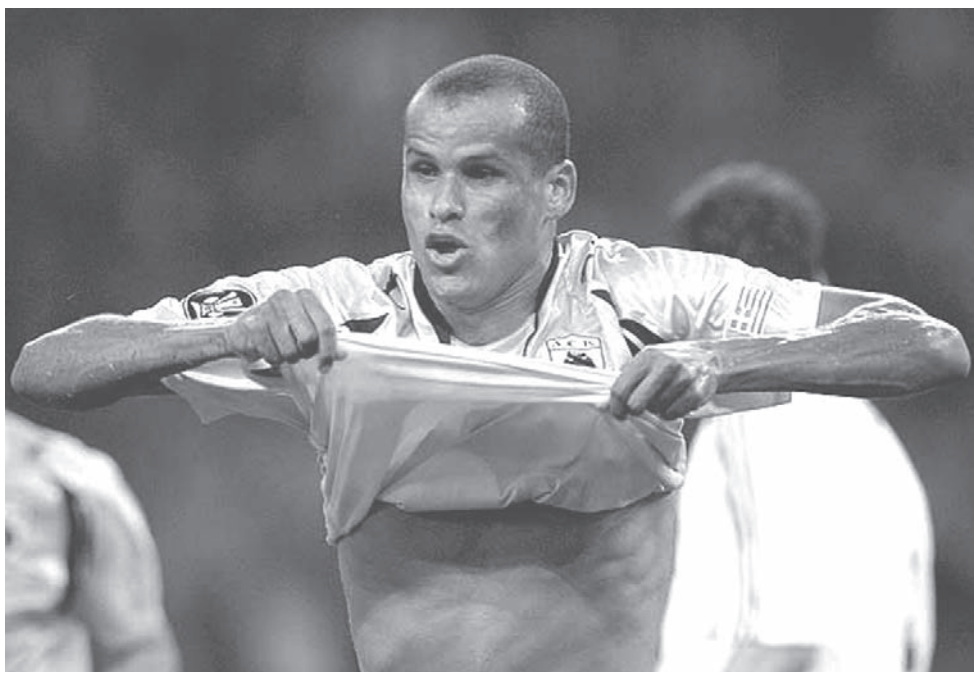
The 2008/09 Greek Super League kicked off last weekend, with the highlight of the opening round being AEK's 2-1 win against Panathinaikos in the big derby.

Panathinaikos entered the contest on the back of a huge pre-season, having made some important signings over the summer and then qualifying for the UEFA Champions League, overcoming Dinamo Tbilisi and Sparta Prague in a tough qualifying campaign. The qualification capped off an exceptional pre-season for the Greens, with the signing of Gilberto Silva (from Arsenal for an undisclosed fee) placing the Greens in a strong position for the Super League season. With such a strong squad, Panathinaikos coach Henk Ten Cate will be expecting his side to perform well both in Europe and domestically, where they will attempt to dethrone bitter rivals and defending champions Olympiakos this season.

The other major contender to Olympiakos and Panathinaikos for the title this season will be AEK, despite the Athens-based club coming off a horrendous pre-season. Four key players in Akis Zikos, Trianos Dellas, Nikos Lymberopoulos and former Brazilian World Cup winner Rivaldo have all departed, whilst President and former favourite son Demis Nikolaidis looks certain to depart as well within the next few months. Further bad news for the club has followed as it was eliminated from UEFA Cup qualifying by Cypriot side Omonia. Despite these major setbacks, coach George Donis remains upbeat about the Super League campaign and although he has a young squad, he believes that the club can make a mark on Greece this season. Part of this young squad will be Australian and former Adelaide United midfielder Nathan Burns. Other new faces include Sotiris Kyriakos and Angelos Basinas, both of whom will be well known to Greek football fans for their previous involvement with rivals Panathinaikos and the Greek National Team.

Olympiakos will once again be the favourites to win the league, although the Reds will also start the domestic season with a major setback, as their shock aggregate loss to Cypriot Champions Anorthosis in Champions League qualifying means they will miss the Champions League for the first time in over 10 years. In what was a stunning result, Anorthosis shocked the Greek Champions 3-0 in the first leg at home and despite losing the second leg in Greece, managed to win the series comfortably by a scoreline of 3-1. Despite this major disappointment, Olympiakos can still look forward to participating in the UEFA Cup.

Manager Ernesto Valverde has made a couple of key signings for the 2008 season that will see his side once again challenge for the league championship. Joining the Piraeus based club are Brazilians Dudu and Diogo, both of whom are expected to make a significant difference to the Olympiakos starting line-up. Diogo is expected to slot into the forward position next to veteran Darko Kovacevic, with many football pundits around Athens already likening the young Brazilian to ex-Olympiakos striker and club legend Giovanni. Young Greek defender Avraam Papadopoulos (previously from Aris) has joined the Brazilian duo, whilst Sebastian Leto has joined from English giants Liverpool on a one-year loan deal. With a balanced and deep squad, it would take a special performance by one of the other big three to stop the Olympiakos dominance domestically, given the Reds have won 11 of the last 12 championships. The reigning champions have already won their opening round game against Asteras Tripolis 3-1, with Diogo, Leto and Dudu all dominating on debut.

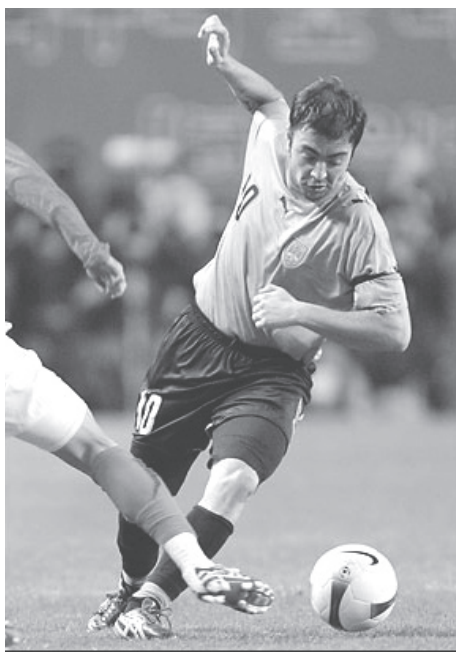


Rivaldo, who stunned AEK with his decision to leave after just one season, said this week he had received an offer he could not turn down. Rivaldo signed a 2 year contract worth 10.2 million euros at FC Bunyodkor in Uzbekistan.

In other news, PAOK will be looking at a renewed performance this season after a solid 0-2 away victory against OFI in Crete. PAOK have struggled in the previous few seasons and an early away win will no doubt have lifted the spirits of the big club from Thessaloniki. Another club looking at pushing for a European birth will be Panionios, as the Panthers have made an impact on the league in the past few seasons and have bolstered their squad during the week with the unexpected signing of former Inter Milan attacking midfielder Alvaro Recoba. With all of the big three unsuccessful in signing Recoba in previous seasons, it has been a major coup for Panionios to snare the signature of the Uruguayan. The signing has also lifted the spirits of the club, following a shattering 0-1 home loss to Xanthi in the opening round.

In other results, former Newcastle defender Nolberto Solano lead his club Larissa to the top of the table, after easily dispatching of newcomers Thrasyvoulos 3-0 at home, whilst Ergotelis also impressed by beating Pantharakikos away from home 1-2. In Thessaloniki, Aris had a solid 2-0 home win against Levediakos, whilst Iraklis succumbed to Panserriakos 1-2 in a stunning derby result in front of almost 8000 spectators, most of which were away fans.

After a weekend off due to international matches, the Super League will re-commence this weekend with Olympiakos having to take on the in-form Xanthi away from home. In the pick of the matches however, AEK must travel to Toumpa to take on PAOK in what promises to be an important and quite heated derby match. With both sides having great wins in the opening round, this promises to be an absolute cracker.



Recoba continues the South American flavour in Greece by signing for Panionios

Adonis FC

By George Kouroumalis

FOXTEL CUP
The Victorian Football Show
Every Wednesday C31 8pm

The Green Gully Football Show
Every Saturday C31 10.30am

World Game
Football Show
88.6 FM Plenty Valley
11am Every Saturday

FOXTEL

World Cup Qualifiers
Wed Sep 10 Nth Korea v Sth Korea, 5pm LIVE
Thur Sep 11 Uzbekistan v Australia, 1.30am LIVE
Thurs Sep 11 UAE v Saudi Arabia, 4.00 am LIVE
Thurs Sep 11 Qatar v Bahrain, 6.30 am DELAY

Asian Champions League
Wed Sep 17 Kashima v Adelaide, 8.00 pm LIVE
Wed Sep 24 Adelaide v Kashima, 7.30 pm LIVE

Coca-Cola Championship
Sun Sep 14 Derby v Sheffield Utd, 2.15 am LIVE
Sun Sep 28 Ipswich v C Palace, 7.30 am DELAY

A-League
Fri Sep 12 Melbourne v Adelaide, 7.30 pm LIVE
Sat Sep 13 Newcastle v Sydney, 6.30 pm LIVE
Sun Sep 14 Wellington v Central Coast, 3pm LIVE
Sun Sep 14 Perth v Queensland, 5.00 pm LIVE

SETANTA

Tuesday 9th September
6:30am Peru vs Venezuela
8:15am Ecuador vs Bolivia
10am FYR Macedonia vs Scotland
11am LIVE Chile vs Brazil
4:15pm Malta vs Portugal

Tuesday 9th September
1:45am Poland vs Slovenia
7pm Football Matters
11:45pm MUTV

Wednesday 10th September
10am LIVE Paraguay vs Venezuela

Thursday 11th September
0:00am LIVE Russia vs Wales
3:30am LIVE Croatia vs England
8:30am LIVE Chile vs Colombia
10:45am LIVE Brazil vs Bolivia
12:45pm Croatia vs England
2:30pm Turkey vs Belgium
4:15pm Latvia vs Greece
6pm Iceland vs Scotland
7pm Russia vs Wales
8pm Croatia vs England
11pm France vs Serbia

Friday 12th September
0:45am Portugal vs Denmark
2:30am Finland vs Germany
4:30am Blue Square Premier League
LIVE Lewes vs Rushden
9:15am Uruguay vs Ecuador
11am Peru vs Argentina
12:45pm Croatia vs England
2:30pm Brazil vs Bolivia
4:15pm San Marino vs Poland

Saturday 13th September
4am Bundesliga LIVE Frankfurt vs Karlsruher
8:30pm SPL LIVE Motherwell vs Celtic
11:55pm SPL LIVE Rangers vs Kilmarnock

Sunday 14th September
2am Serie A LIVE Palermo vs Roma
5am Ligue 1 LIVE Bordeaux vs Marseille
10am Bundesliga Schalke vs Dortmund
11pm Serie A LIVE Napoli vs Fiorentina

Monday 15th September
1am Bundesliga LIVE Bochum vs Bielefeld
5am Ligue 1 LIVE PSG vs Nantes

Tuesday 16th September
0:00 MUTV – EPL Liverpool vs Man Utd
4:30am Setanta Sports Cup LIVE St Pats vs Derry

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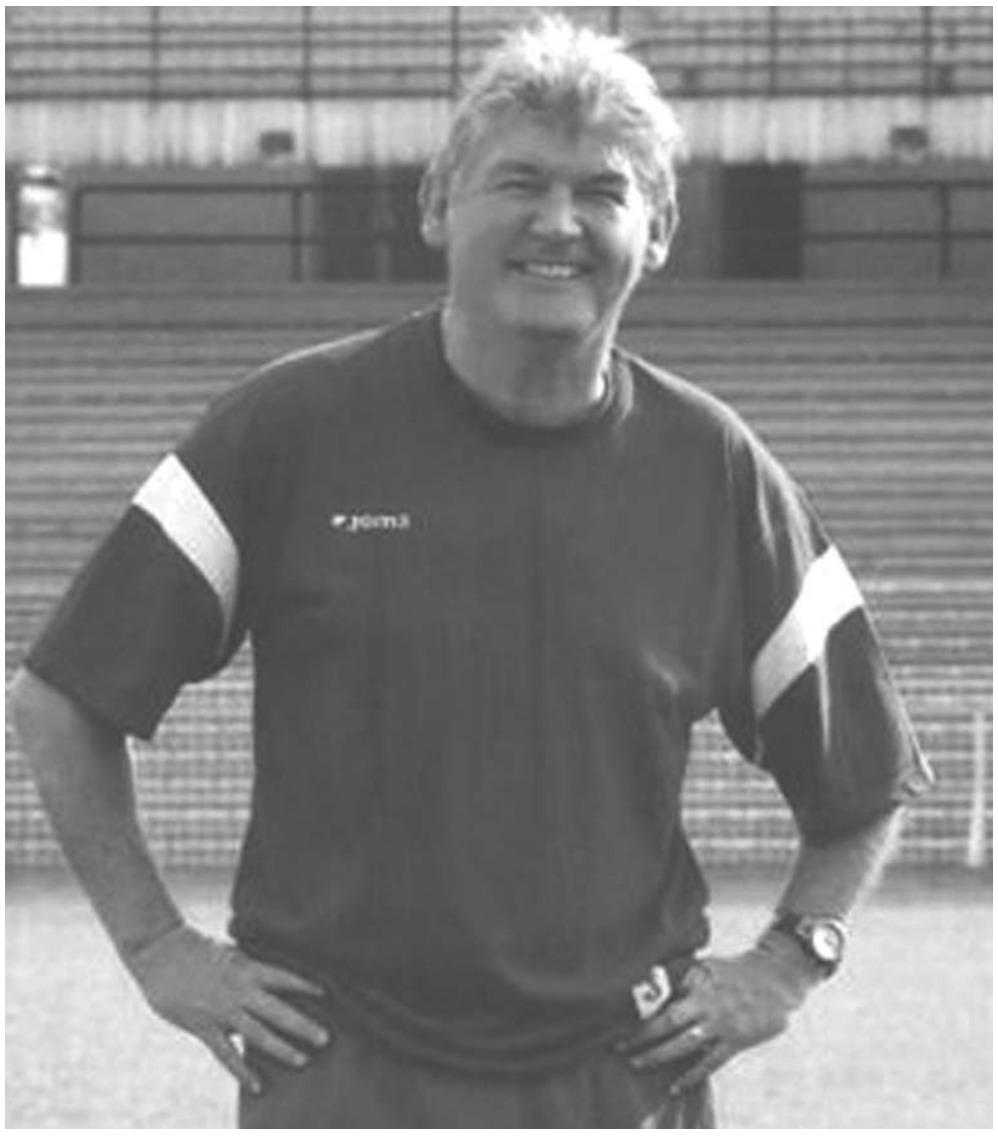
Steve Darby

COACHING JOURNEYMAN

Darby's International Diaries

Goal! Weekly's Walter Pless spends some time with his old mate, Steve Darby, the Aussie coach of Perak in the Malaysian top flight who are also in the Asian Cup quarterfinals next month. He coached Police to the Singapore title a couple of seasons ago and has also coached in Vietnam and was asssiatnt coach in Bahrein. He was once the Matildas' coach, too, and married the captain, Anissa Tan-Derby.



Have Boots Will Travel: Well traveled coach Steve Darby in Asia

WP: In which country have you enjoyed coaching the most?

SD: Probably Singapore as I had the best organised club I have ever been in with Home Utd. We won everything and even got to the AFC Cup semi-finals with a 16-man squad. We also got to the finals of the AFC team of the Year. It was superbly managed and I only left when the management changed as I knew it wasn't going to work. They haven't won anything since 2005, which is a pity as the potential was so great for the club. We even reached the knockout stages of the AFC Champions league in 2003.

WP: What has been your toughest coaching job, and why?

SD: Probably this one at Perak. Crowds of 40,000 plus who just want you to win and have no concept that teams with budgets 25% of others and small squads don't win everything. We are working with great players, but no infrastructure and chaotic administration. We have no training ground and, at the moment, no money. Welcome to the real world of coaching.

When I lecture on AFC A-licence courses, I try to establish that you can coach better if the environment around you is organised and everybody is working in the same direction. In Malaysia, you are the best Coach in the world one week, and the worst next week when you lose.

WP: What have been the enjoyable things about coaching in Malaysia?

SD: The money! Also the fact that football is important in the country. Everybody knows about the game. The positive side of the passion is great.

Also, as a lifestyle, Malaysia is great, It's safe and warm all year round. Sure beats coaching at Sheffield Wednesday in minus temperatures, the balls having ice on them and young players who didn't want to learn. The Malaysian players want to learn and get better.

WP: Which system do you prefer, or does it depend on the players you have available?

SD: I have been using 3-4-1-2 for a couple of years as I have always tried to sign a "free player", a "Number 10" who can do damage to your opposition. This can easily change to 3-1-4-2 when defending. But, you need great athletes out wide and an intelligent sweeper.

Recently, as I haven't had a true number 10, I've been using 4-2-3-1, especially in away games in the AFC Cup when you need a result. Not pretty but effective. If it's good enough for Germany. It's good enough for me.

WP: What do you think of Australia's entry into Asia?

SD: The best thing for both parties, because it's a definite win-win. Australia has superb organisation and infrastructure such as the AIS, and Asia has the passion of football being the number one sport. Combining the two, benefits everybody.

WP: What must Australia do to be successful in Asia?

SD: Win something. This continent is geared towards winning and nothing else. Also, let's not be so arrogant. Some of the reports that Aussies have "supposedly" said are deemed very arrogant here. Win humbly, and the doors will open everywhere.

Also, try to show A league on TV. Nobody sees it here.

WP: How is the A-League regarded in Asia?

SD: To be honest, very little is written (or seen) about it. Australian performances in the ACL also haven't been that great. The best Australian ambassadors are still the players who play in the EPL, such as Viduka and Schwartzer. The Asian region is flooded by EPL media coverage, so even the great players in Serie A such as Grella and Kalac are unheard of.

I think Adelaide have done a great job to get to the quarterfinals, but now they meet the big boys.

WP: Is there anything you would have changed in your coaching career in hindsight?

SD: Being in the right place at the right time. I honestly believe there are better coaches than me unemployed, and worse coaches coaching and conning a great living. I respect Mourhino a great deal. He was at the right place as a translator with Barcelona, but he went on to prove his ability once he was given the chance. But, I've coached in 7 countries and visited 23 through football, so I'm not complaining.

WP: Who are the five best players you have coached?

Hamood Sultan, the Bahrain Goalkeeper in 1979. On a different planet. He was wanted by Santos of Brazil, but didn't want to go. You had to see him to realise he was unbeatable when he wanted to be. He is the only keeper to win AFC Player of the Year.

Ned Zelic. Even at the age of 14 he was different class. People said he was slow. But, he kept going past people slowly! He could see things that nobody else could and was a great athlete. The best true libero I have seen.

Mark Viduka. The most gentle feet in the world for a big man. Only worked a few times with him at the AIS, but what a player, and so underrated.

J Surachai, the captain and legend of Thailand. I coached him when he was past his best, but the best passer of a ball I have seen and, for a small fellow, he could look after himself. When I was working with ESPN, we used to bring out EPL players who trained with me at Home Utd. They all asked who this player was. He could easily have played EPL.

Peres D'Oliveira. A Brazilian in Singapore. A true number 10 who could pass you to death, take free kicks, and score goals. I was told that he was too slow. I said that if he had pace as well, he would be in Italy, not Singapore.

All had the same characteristics. They were good lads off the pitch, worked hard on the pitch, and could produce results under pressure when it mattered.

I have often wondered how far players from Tasmania such as 'Spider' Lesczcynski and Ian Parker could have gone if they had moved on to higher levels. 'Spider' was a magnificent character for me at White Eagles and the game needs players like that. I've been lucky that in most teams I've had a leader and I encourage them to show leadership.

WP: Which is the best team you have coached?

SD: Home Utd in 2003 and 2004. We won the double in Singapore and got to the AFC Cup semi finals. A great team with marvellous characters. A good mix of Brazilians and Thaïs and tough Singaporean Internationals. I had two local lads who ran the dressing room and they led the team, letting the foreigners just play! It was a pleasure to work with them. They always wanted to get better.

I also had a great staff and management. Everything went right for two years. It could have been a dynasty. But salary cap restrictions stopped us getting better and a change in management destroyed the atmosphere and all the players (and myself) left the club.

WP: If you could have any coaching job in the world, which would it be and why?

SD: Liverpool! I was born 100 metres from Anfield and was indoctrinated by Shankly. I even had the honour to meet him, and it was an honour. He was top class. Liverpool is the dream job.

WP: Where do you want to coach next?

SD: As Liverpool haven't phoned me lately, I would like to go to Japan or Korea as they are so well organised, and it's easier to coach if there is organisation and well-financed systems. Or, maybe back to the Middle East. It's hard work there and ruthless, but that's the reality of coaching in Asia.

WP: Will you ever get sick of football?

SD: Never sick of football, but sick of some of the things that go with the job: crazy administrative decisions and inane journalism. I am a great fan of the internet, but I'm afraid the "blogger" has become a dangerous part of the game. People who have never played the game character assassinating professionals. I find it sad. If they want to contribute to the game, get off the computer and get out to the schools and clubs where they could apply their so called knowledge. They'd soon find out talking about coaching and actually coaching are two different issues, especially when the temperature is -2 degrees!

WP: Will an Australian team win the Asian Champions' League any time soon?

SD: Not unless the attitude changes. I was amazed at some of the things I heard coming out of Sydney before they were eliminated. Some of the things were quite colonial! As Chonburi showed, a Thai provincial team finished ahead of Melbourne Victory. Australians have to learn that there are some excellent well-funded and well-run clubs at the elite Asian level. Also, they have top-class foreigners. Plus, when you go to places like Syria, it can be quite an education on how to win off the pitch!

Some of the things you have to put up with in away games in AFC tournaments are quite an experience.

WP: Can Australia qualify for the 2010 World Cup?

SD: I hope so, and I think they will. I felt China was their biggest obstacle and, once again, China let themselves down. Australia should have the ability to finish in the top two of their group, as long as they put out their best eleven. Away to Uzbekistan will not be easy.

WP: Where do you want to retire?

SD: Fern Tree in Hobart, Tasmania! Paradise. I really wish Tassie had an A-league team and I would return tomorrow.

WP: Would you encourage your son to pursue a career in football?

SD: I've met the best people in the world through football…and sadly some of the worst. But the good greatly outweigh the bad and the atmosphere of belonging to a great dressing room is something that money can't buy and I will always cherish. You have to have been in one to understand what this means.

By Walter Pless

Photo by Walter Pless

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goal! Weekly

THUNDER STORMS INTO VPL

Dandenong Thunder 2
St Albans Saints 0

Dandenong Thunder farewelled State League Division One with a comfortable 2-0 home win over St Albans Saints, their 18th match without defeat.

Former Kingston City team-mates Joe DiIorio and Marcus Stergiopoulos scored in the second half for the Thunder to secure all three points.

The visitors adopted a cautious approach in the first half playing with lone striker Josip Loncaric. Yet for all their caution, the visitors were fortunate not to be 2-0 down at the break. Thunder midfielder Ryan Davidson left his goalscoring boots behind when he missed a couple of excellent chances to score in one-on-one situations with Saints' keeper Damir Salcin.

St Albans' best chance of the half came when Miol missed a free header from an Ivan Filipovic cross. Thunder struck in the 53rd minute when DiIorio tapped home Xhezair Sulemani's strong header across the goal face.

The visitors pushed men forward in an effort to find an equalizer. Young sub Jozelici missed an open goal after Liam Cannels' shot rebounded off the upright. Thunder keeper Yehya Dimasi denied the visitors an equalizer with a diving save at his near post from a Filipovic free kick.

But Thunder secured victory in the 88th minute when Stergiopoulos scored from close range following a rebound from Alfonso Opazo's shot.

All In The Chorus! The Thunderlads hit the high notes after hitting the big time. Frm left to right in the sing-a-long is Ibrahim Ibraimi, Xhezair Sulemani, Mentor Memeti, Joe Dilorio, Fitim Ibraimi. PHOTO: GEORGE STOGIANNOU

After the game, a delighted Thunder coach Zoran Trajceski commented, " At the start of the season, I said, ' Anything under second position is not going to be a success for me.' I'm glad I kept my promise to the club. It was a new team and we had a couple of hiccups at the start. But since round five we haven't lost a game. I'm thrilled. It's been an excellent season"

When asked what winning promotion means to him, Trajceski replied " Any promotion is very hard. Some players and coaches spend their whole career without making promotion. Already I've got three which makes me feel very happy. This club has a lot of potential. They're very stable, hungry and they want to go up and be successful. The only problem at this club is patience. It they are patient, everything is going to be on the right way. We're definitely going to be competitive and stay in the Premier League next year. But I want to make something more and different at this club."

Sate League Div One

By George Stogiannou

BRUNSWICK FINISH ON A WINNING NOTE

North Geelong 0
Brunswick City 1

Brunswick City ended their final commitment of the 2008 with a surprising 1-0 win at North Geelong.

The home team were certainly the favourites with some good performances this year justifying their fourth position on the ladder. For Brunswick the dead rubber did not mean much but a loss could have seen them drop to sixth, if Ballarat could upset the 2008 champions Pascoe Vale. Brunswick also went into the game without Jackson and the Lara based ground holds some negative memories for the Brunswick team over the last few years.

Brunswick surprisingly began well and in the 5' when Con Vouloumanos found himself unmarked ten yards out it appeared the first goal over the game was about to be scored. Unfortunately his left foot shot was misguided cannoning into the side netting.

The game really took off from this point with both teams creating some good chances even though it was the home team who dominated the possession. North Geelong's Gavran should have made it 1-0 when he latched onto the ball from a flick on but his header from point blank range sailed over the crossbar to let Brunswick off the hook.

The excellent surface was conducive to some excellent soccer and when Brunswick's Gonullu was obstructed in the penalty area it appeared the first goal of the game was coming. Much to everyone's surprise Ciantar called upon his goalkeeper, Dimitropoulos, to take it. The Brunswick custodian, who to my knowledge has never scored a goal in a competitive game, blasted his shot straight up the middle expecting his opposite number to dive to his left or right.

Malesic though stood his ground and deflected the shot over the bar. The jeers from the North Geelong supporters were silenced fifteen minutes later when the North Geelong keeper turned from hero to villain. An innocuous cross from Jim Vouloumanos cleared the pack of players that appeared to be contesting the cross, bouncing in front of Malesic who somehow misjudged the ball resulting in the opening goal of the game. North Geelong lifted the tempo but struggled to create any clear cut chances due to the well organised defence of Brunswick lead through the goalscorer Jim Vouloumanos.

The second half saw North Geelong come out with even more purpose about their play. In the 50' when man of the match Ante Deak found Adrian Cervinski unmarked the equaliser was surely imminent. Cervimski turned beat the keeper only to see his goal bound shot blocked on the line by Danos.

The home team continued to press forward committing more and more players forward allowing Brunswick to attack on the counter. In the 74' Gorcevski's pass split the defence finding Gonullu who struck his volley with venom only to see his shot cannon of the upright. Minutes later on the opposite end of the field Dragicevic broke free from the defence to find himself one on one with Dimitropoulos.

The Brunswick keeper though made amends for his earlier miss by pulling off a magnificent save. North geelong continued to over commit and when Gorcevski broke free in the 80' with Cannizaro to his left and Sadik to his right the 3 v1 chance looked certain to put the game beyond doubt. Gorcevski opted to go alone a shot only to see Malesic save his shot. For the last ten minutes Brunswick defended in numbers at the back and was not helped with the sending off of Gorcevski for time wasting. The miserly defence though stood tall and the score remained at 0-1.

Brunswick City 1
North Geelong 0
Goalscorers: Jim Vouloumanos

Best: J.Vouloumanos, Dimitropoulos, Cannizarro, C.Vouloumanos

Line up: Dimitropoulos, Danos, , Dokolas, J.Vouloumanos, Gorcevski Karas, Daniel Sadik, Dennis Sadik, Gonullu (Jones 75'), C.Vouloumanos, Canizzaro (81' Cicchiti)

Reserves

The reserve team won 2-0 with Nazir Khouri scoring one goal for Brunswick whilst the other score was an own goal.

Special Thanks- I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Nik Kanellakos whose tireless match reporting and statistical analysis of each game have reflected the professionalism and passion that he has for Brunswick City. Well done Nik on another outstanding season it has been a pleasure working with you.

State League Div One

By Loui Simopoulos

By Nic Townsend

11th Hour Dramas

Any football tragic who couldn't help but follow the final few hours at the close of the transfer window last Monday would not have been disappointed for once. Usually such occasions produce nothing more then a few loan signings or other insignificant transactions between smaller clubs; the big deals having been well and truly tied by weeks ago. But this year with only hours to spare two £30 million plus deals went through, both of which will have profound significance for the season to follow.

On the eve of the final transfer day many expected Dimitar Berbatov's name to feature prominently with a move to Manchester more than probable. When it emerged that the Manchester club in question was City and not United, the initial reaction of many would have been that a typo had been made. It wasn't until City's new owners were revealed, thus providing an answer of where the money was going to come from that the rumour could start to be taken seriously.

In the end Berbatov made the expected move to Old Trafford but not before the football world thought City were about to make an incredible coup over their derby rivals. Meanwhile City's new Middle Eastern owners were throwing vast sums of cash in other directions and all the attention on Berbatov hid the fact they had made a similar offer to Real Madrid's Chelsea target Robinho.

In another move that took everyone by surprise, even Robinho himself was a little confused: "On the last day, Chelsea made a great proposal and I accepted…[I mean] Manchester, sorry!" Rumour has it that the deal was done in such haste the Brazilian striker didn't even have time for a medical.

City fans will be hoping Robinho knows which direction the goals are in Manchester

If City fans thought it was surreal to hear their club being linked to Ronaldhinho last month, they'll now be testing their tap water to make sure it hasn't spiked with LCD.

Abu Dhabi United Group's purchase of Man City took place too close to the close of the transfer window for them to exercise the full potential of their fortune. If the bold claims being reported in the press are anything to go by it won't be the last big name signing. No one can accuse them of lacking ambition as they have already pledge to sign Fernando Torres, Cesc Fabregas and most unbelievably Cristiano Ronaldo. The signing of Robinho is certainly a statement of intention and the fact they beat England's other big spender, Chelsea, suggests the resources are there to fulfil at least part of their plans.

Meanwhile Manchester United finally clinched their much sought after world-class striker thus plugging an important gap in their forward line. The additional of Berbatov could well make United almost unbeatable, at least until January when they'll not only have to fight off Real Madrid off for Ronaldo, but Man City too.

Sack Race Begins.

Three games into the new season and already there have been managerial casualties. Kevin Keegan and Alan Curbishley were both early favourites as the season's first sacking but this week each managed to avoid that humiliation by quitting first. Both cited a lack of control and freedom in their transfer dealings as their reasoning. In Keegan's case the argument is quite plausible. From the beginning he was thrust into a difficult and unfamiliar work environment for British managers where a Director of Football, Dennis Wise, took responsibility for transfers. Players have been sold and offered to other clubs without the approval of Keegan. He made an ultimatum and the Newcastle board made their choice knowing it would cost them a manager.

However in the case Alan Curbishley, the argument is less credible. Curbishley has been at Upton Park long enough to stamp some sort of influence on the team and must take responsibility for some of the transfers that have taken place. Anton Ferdinand and George McCartney may have been sold without his blessing but West Ham have in part been forced to sell players to balance to books after reckless spending in seasons past. In January 2007 faced with the very real threat of relegation Curbusley threw money at players with hasty desperation in an attempt to keep afloat. The following summer wasn't much better. Expensive singings such as Scott Parker, Kieran Dyer, Craig Bellamy, Luis Boa Morte and Freddie Ljungberg have proved dismal failures. Others like Lucas Neil and Matthew Upsom, are earning wages right out of proportion to the actual ability. Curbishley wasn't complaining then so he can't complain now when that carelessness comes back to bite him.

Gossip and Transfer Speculation from the English Media...

Spain Considers 2018

Spain is considering to join the race for the hosting of the 2008 World Cup. This was revealed by the country's FA president in an interview with Radio Marca.

Angel Maria villar, chairman of the RFEF, told the radio station that the association would like to research whether hosting the tournament would be possible, and added that "there is a chance that we will submit our candidacy".

If Spain choose to do so, they face some serious competition with nations as England, Russia, the Netherlands & Belgium, the United States and Australia considering a bid as well.

The 2018 tournament is likely to be held in Europe, North America, Asia or Australia. Africa is represented with South Africa in 2010, while South America have Brazil as hosts in 2014.

Spitting ChipsFor Rajkovic

Serbian defender Slobodan Rajkovic was on Friday banned for 12 months for spitting at the referee following his side's 2-0 defeat by Argentina in a group match at the Beijing Olympics, FIFA announced.

The incident took place after 19-year-old Rajkovic, who plays at Chelsea but has been loaned out to Dutch side Twente, had been one of two Serbian players shown a red card by Abdullah Al Hilali.

A statement from the FIFA Disciplinary Committee read: "At its 1 September 2008 meeting, the FIFA Disciplinary Committee decided to suspend Slobodan Rajkovic (Serbia) for 12 months for spitting at the referee on 13 August 2008 after the Argentina vs. Serbia match at the Olympic Football Tournaments.

"This suspension applies to all national and international matches including club competitions. This decision may be appealed."

Italians Do It Better

Inter Milan's teenage star Mario Balotelli pinned his colours firmly to Italy on Thursday by insisting that he does not want to play for the land of his forefathers.

Balotelli was born in Palermo to Ghanaian immigrants, whose surname is Barwuah, but when he was three years old he was entrusted to an Italian family, called Balotelli. Due to Italian law he could not request Italian citizenship until he turned 18, last month, as he was never formally adopted and now he is part of the Italy under-21 squad.

"I'm Italian, I feel Italian, I will always play for Italy," he said. "I've never considered playing for Ghana, even two years ago when they called me up."

He signed for Inter in 2006 and made his first team breakthrough last season, at just 17 years of age. Ghana had tried to call him up for their national team but Balotelli turned them down several times to pursue his dream of playing for Italy.

Palermo Fire Coach, Again

Palermo coach Stefano Colantuono has been fired by the club after only one match in this season's Serie A.

Club chairman Maurizio Zamparini, who has a reputation of easily hiring and sacking staff members, announced this decision today despite an opposing claim just a day earlier.

On Wednesday, Zamparini said that he would await the result of Palermo's match with AS Roma, to be played next week.

It is the second time that Colantuono is fired at the Sicilian club, receiving the same treatment November last year, only to be hired back four months later.

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